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The Nation.

January 17, 1981 $1

EDITORIAL

WHO WATCHES WATCHERS?

For some time now we have been wondering why no one has ever complained about Congress's exemption of itself from the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act. Congress is supposed to watch the executive branch, but who oversees Congress?

Take the brand-new chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Senator Strom Thurmond. Thurmond abhors the F.O.I.A., as well he might in view of a memorandum from the F.B.I.'s COINTELPRO files recently released under the act. Back in 1961, it seems, the Bureau arranged to have one of its patented anonymous letters sent to officials of the Congress of Racial Equality, alerting them to the fact that a "Communist Party leader" in San Francisco was seeking to form a chapter of CORE. And who did Martha DeLoach, a top aide to F.B.I. Director J. Edgar Hoover, call upon to go public with the Bureau's allegation? Good ol' Strom.

According to the F.B.I. memorandum, dated October 3, 1961, Senator Thurmond "exposed on the floor of the United States Senate on September 26, 1961, the fact that two Communists in the San Francisco area had made application to start a San Francisco chapter of CORE]." Thanks to this prestigious plug, the memo boasted, United Press International ran a story citing Thurmond's speech.

It is too bad there are no confirmation hearings on the chairmanship of the Judiciary Committee. They would have provided an opportunity to ask the new chairman if he was showing a proper sensitivity to the separation of powers doctrine when he offered up for public consumption the F.B.I.'s latest poisoned fruits. How many other speeches made under the cloak of Congressional immunity have smuggled stolen (i.e., obtained by wiretaps) goods into the national dialogue? *Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?*

DINNER AT THE DE LA RENTAS
Calvin Trillin

IRAN REVISITED
Richard Falk
William O. Beeman
Jonathan M. Winer

GAS DEALER CLOSEOUT
Fred J. Cook

AFGHANISTAN
Fred Halliday

BLIND AMBITION
Mark Shechner

MURDOCHLAND
Alice K. Turner

THE HERITAGE REPORT

UNLEASHING THE DOGS OF McCARTHYISM

JAY PETERZELL

Ronald Reagan's advisers are recommending major changes in U.S. intelligence activities. If they have their way, domestic spying will increase. Loyalty-security programs will be back. Congress will hold internal-security hearings. The Central Intelligence Agency will no longer dominate foreign intelligence analysis—which provides the framework for America's military and diplomatic planning—but will share this responsibility with the Pentagon. If this sounds like a right-wing dream, it is.

The best clue thus far to the new Administration's plans for intelligence is a recent report prepared for Reagan by the Heritage Foundation, a conservative Washington-based think tank. Summaries of the report have appeared in the press, but most of the stories have been rather cursory, with the effect of downplaying it. Ostensibly written by a member of the Heritage Foundation staff, the intelligence section of the 3,000-page report was actually drafted by conservative Congressional aides and advisers to Reagan's intelligence transition team. It represents a trial balloon for their maximum agenda.

The premise of the Heritage report is alarm. "The threat to the internal security of the Republic is greater today than at any time since World War II," it charges, "and the number of public men who are even aware of the threat is so small as to be negligible." The report calls for a major campaign of public education, beginning with the revival of standing internal-security committees in Congress to investigate and hold hearings on the present danger. The President

(Continued on Page 51)

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LETTERS.

URUGUAYANS REJECT SECURITY STATE

New York City

Patrick Breslin's article, "The Lights Are Out in Uruguay" [*The Nation*, Nov. 22, 1980], could not have been more timely. Running against the general indifference of the American press, *The Nation* sensibly focused its attention on that Southern Cone country when the Uruguayan people needed it most—on the eve of a crucial test of wills with a military dictatorship that was trying to perpetuate itself. Had the new Constitution tailored by the Armed Forces been approved, the plebiscite held on November 30 would have perfected, in a most perverse way, the "first-class catastrophe" that Uruguay suffered following the 1973 military coup.

But the vote led instead to a first-class victory, the overwhelming majority of the people rejecting the military's "National Security State." Undeterred by seven years of brutal repression, the Uruguayans proved the vitality of their democratic convictions. In the months ahead, they will no doubt step up their challenge, aiming for the appointment of a truly representative Constitutional Convention, the restoration of political and civil liberties and the proclamation of an amnesty for some 1,600 political prisoners languishing under what the International Committee of the Red Cross (I.C.R.C.) has described as a maximum security system "well-known for its reputation of bringing about the physical and moral breakdown of the inmates."

Libertad, the military-run institution where 1,200 male prisoners are held in Uruguay, "is the place where such [a] system is pushed beyond the usual limits, both in the area of security and in the search of every possible means of hurting the prisoners," the Red Cross stated in a major inquiry recently leaked to Uruguayan exiles in Europe. Copies of the I.C.R.C. report may be requested from P.O. Box 1259, G.P.O., New York, New York 10001.

Uruguay Information Group

PEN'S CONCERNS

New York City

We commend you for Patrick Breslin's fine article on the much neglected Uruguayan situation. Only such exposure and continued attention to nearly forgotten conditions can break the glacial silence with which the news from the Southern Cone is greeted by most of the U.S. press.

On a recent trip to Mexico, Dore Ashton, chairman of PEN's Freedom-to-Write Committee, met with exiles of several Southern Cone nations. She reports that coverage in *The Nation* is taken very seriously by the governments of Latin America, who have learned to pay attention to those journals called *La Nación* which are published in most Latin American countries.

The PEN Freedom-to-Write Committee is currently seeking the release of the prominent journalist Ismael Weinberger Weisz, who is one of innumerable authors, journalists and professors imprisoned and tortured in Uruguay. Weinberger was a writer on trade union affairs for the newspaper *El Popular* for seventeen years and a leader of the Uruguayan Press Association. He was arrested in February 1976, held incommunicado for ten months and tortured. Weinberger has asked for permission to emigrate to Israel. He is currently detained at Penal de Libertad Prison and is in poor health.

Belle Chevigny and Dore Ashton, for the Freedom-to-Write Committee

EXPLOITING MORGENTHAU'S DEATH?

New York City

In Prof. Aryeh Neier's account of "The I.P.S. and Its Enemies" [*The Nation*, Dec. 6, 1980], he characterizes "officers of the National Committee on American Foreign Policy [as] contemptible slander-mongers" and opportunists who "exploit[ed Prof. Hans Morgenthau's] name after his death."

According to him, the late Professor Morgenthau resigned from the National Committee after I printed Dr. Rael Isaac's piece on the Institute for Policy Studies in the National Committee's *Newsletter*. What Neier has conveniently failed to tell, however, is the pivotal point that Morgenthau retracted and nullified his resignation on June 5, 1980, a mere twenty-four hours after he wrote the letter that Neier cites. Nostalgia and the feeling of auld lang syne notwithstanding, the "ailing" Morgenthau thought better of his initial reaction and changed his mind when he agreed to my suggestion that the following issue of the *Newsletter* include an insert to read as follows:

> The February 1980 issue of the *Newsletter* (Vol. 3, No. 1) which contained the article by Dr. Rael Jean Isaac entitled "New-Left Input Into United States Foreign Policy" was issued without approval of the National Committee on American Foreign Policy, Inc. Its publication does not constitute an expression of approval on the part of the committee.

Why has Neier chosen to ignore readily available information? In addition to the insert, on June 18, 1980, for example, more than four weeks before the death of Morgenthau, I was publicly questioned about this text and the twenty-four-hour episode by a number of the 100 or so prominent members and guests who attended the annual dinner of the National Committee. Furthermore, when someone wrote to the *Jewish Week-American Examiner*, in a vein strikingly similar to that of Neier, mercilessly intruding into the place of rest to which Morgenthau was summoned, I addressed myself to this episode once more (issue of October 12).

Because Morgenthau until his death remained chairman of the National Committee, it was only fitting for the committee to organize a memorial convocation.

George Schwab
Editor, Newsletter
National Committee on American Foreign Policy

NEIER REPLIES

New York City

What George Schwab has conveniently failed to tell is that my characterization of officers of the National Committee on American Foreign Policy in my article was explicitly limited to those who did not protest Rael Isaac's article. I believe that officers of an organization should take responsibility for its acts. That is what Hans Morgenthau did by resigning forcing the National Committee to dissociate itself from the contemptible slander Schwab published in the committee's newsletter. Their action made possible for Morgenthau to withdraw his resignation.

Aryeh Neier

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EDITORIALS.

Question Time

Only days before the Senate confirmation hearings on the Reagan Cabinet began, we were treated to perhaps the final public embarrassment from Zbigniew Brzezinski—Brzezinski at the pass, one more time. The National Security Adviser made his last stand before the White House files on Alexander M. Haig. To honor Senator Claiborne Pell's request for those files, Zbig said on a Sunday-morning interview show, would be participating in a "witch hunt." When his rhetoric had been sorted through by the Monday-morning journalistic cleanup crews, it seemed clear that Brzezinski, who had not the slightest understanding of the "governmental privilege" issue White House lawyers had raised, really meant confirm Al Haig now!

We, of course, agree with J. Anthony Lukas, who, in last week's issue, suggested a series of hard questions for Haig on Watergate and related matters. We have, however, little hope that the Republican majority on the Foreign Relations Committee will pursue them beyond the *pro forma* minimum. As for the Democratic minority, its investigative resources and time are severely limited, but we presume that someone has at least checked out of the library Gerald Ford's memoirs and reread his account of Haig's role in the Nixon pardon—an account sufficiently newsworthy to warrant our reporting it in advance of the official publication date of Ford's book [see editorial, "Behind the Nixon Pardon," April 7, 1979].

The questions relevant to Haig's fitness for the office of Secretary of State fall into two areas. First, his Watergate role, which throws light on his character—his Kissingerian "deviousness"—and his conceptions of "loyalty" and executive leadership. The second area comprises his attitudes and record on foreign policy, about which we have had and will no doubt continue to have our doubts. We have no doubts, however, about the case against James Gaius Watt, which is set down by Bob Gottlieb and Peter Wiley on page 36. We can only observe that appointing Watt

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Secretary of the Interior is like appointing Robert Vesco to head the Securities and Exchange Commission. (Readers are invited to concoct their own outrageous comparatives and submit them to our James Watt Look-Alike Contest. Winners will receive an all-expenses-paid tour of the strip mine of their choice and a copy of Watt's forthcoming book, *Why the MX Will Be Good for the Environment.*)

But we do not wish to be totally negative about the new Cabinet. For example, the choice of Samuel R. Pierce Jr. as Secretary of Housing and Urban Development enables us to commend to the Senate confirmers Victor Navasky's *Nation* story, "The FBI's Wildest Dream" (June 17, 1978), which reported on a confidential memo by Assistant Director William Sullivan in which Pierce was put forward as the Federal Bureau of Investigation's candidate to succeed Martin Luther King. According to the memo, King "must . . . be revealed to . . . his Negro followers as . . . a fraud, demagogue and moral scoundrel," and the "right kind of . . . Negro leader . . . be gradually developed" to replace him. Pierce said at the time he didn't know he was Sullivan's choice until *The Nation* story appeared.

There are, of course, people in the Reagan camp who will welcome Sullivan's memo as a letter of recommendation. We hope that it is read into the record at his confirmation hearings and that those agents who thought he was the best successor to King be questioned closely on the propriety of this secret "appointment." But query: Can the New Right stomach the once-future Martin Luther King in HUD?

The Watt Report

Sitting in his office at the Mountain States Legal Foundation recently, Secretary of the Interior-designate James Watt proudly described the guiding philosophy of his pro-business, "public interest" law firm. "We believe in the constitutional rights of businessmen," he said, contrasting this view to that of the "no-growth extremists" of the Ralph Nader-type law firms. He and his associates, Watt declared, were a new generation of "bright young lawyers"—young conservatives who "want to save the establishment, save the system." Watt and his Young Turks act as pro-development troubleshooters—not for groups like the Western Regional Council, the largest pro-development business organization in the West, but for Joseph Coors, the right-wing beer baron who, with conservative media magnate Karl Eller and former Congressman Wayne Aspinall, a relentless foe of pro-environmental legislation, formed the Mountain States Legal Foundation in 1977. Coors, a political ally of Reagan, handpicked Watt as its president, and serves as chairman of the board.

Despite his role as Joe Coors's gunslinger, Watt's selection was something of a surprise to the local business establishment. Many W.R.C. executives, for example, supported Arizona Republican Congressman John Rhodes, who maintained a pro-development stance on resource issues but portrayed himself as situated politically between moderate conservatives and the more extreme "sagebrush rebels." But, according to a W.R.C. insider, Ronald Reagan bucked the choice of Interior Secretary to Nevada Senator Paul Laxalt, who vetoed Rhodes because of an earlier political clash between them over control of the Republican National Committee. The Reagan team ran through several other possible candidates before Watt's name was even mentioned. Then, in the second week of December 1980, Watt came rapidly to the fore, was given Laxalt's blessing and Reagan's final approval.

Watt grew up in Wyoming where he graduated from law school in 1962. That year he went to Washington as a legal aide for Republican Senator Milward Simpson. In 1966, he became the natural resources lobbyist for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and then joined Richard Nixon's Interior Department as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Water and Power Resources and then as Director of the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation. In 1975, Gerald Ford appointed Watt to the Federal Power Commission, where he helped engineer the price rise of newly discovered natural gas to nearly triple its original price. Though the F.P.C. was not then able to bring about deregulation (which Watt actively supported), Watt considered the engineered price rise a "free market" approach that would help increase production.

Applying that kind of thinking to the work of the Mountain States Legal Foundation, Watt immediately committed the firm to a case involving one of Coors's Idaho allies, a plumbing and electrical subcontractor from Pocatello named Ferrol G. (Bill) Barlow. The case arose when Barlow, a member of the John Birch Society and active conservative in his Idaho community, refused to permit an inspector from the Occupational Safety and Health Administation to enter his heating and plumbing establishment. The Idaho lawyer who took up Barlow's case before the U.S. Supreme Court was on the M.S.L.F. Board of Litigants, and the foundation itself filed a brief on Barlow's behalf. The case received widespread attention and attracted financial support from conservative Western businessmen for the M.S.L.F.

Unlike some of the other conservative public interest firms, Watt and the foundation made no attempt to disguise their pro-business, conservative outlook. In short order, the firm took up the cause of the energy companies (a suit against the Interior Department over the RARE II/wilderness designations), mining interests (the question of uranium mining on state lands), cattle ranches (grazing rights in the Rio Puerco area of New Mexico), agribusiness (opposing the Arizona Farm Workers union) and water development interests (suits on salinity issues and big development projects).

Watt fought the Pyramid Lake Paiute Indian tribe in a Nevada water-rights case and explored the possibility of the M.S.L.F. functioning as a clearinghouse for anti-Indian legal action around such issues as sovereignty, severance taxes, pollution control programs and access to Indian lands by the energy companies and other businesses. The firm also opposed senior citizen groups (on a utility lifeline measure), women's groups (on E.R.A. ratification extension) and minority groups (on setting aside a percentage of construc-

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tion contracts for minority subcontractors).

In a 1979 report to the board of directors, Watt outlined a new area of interest, namely, whether Government officials had a personal liability when they used their positions "to deny or delay economic development—whether their refusal to act is an abuse of discretion or part of a conspiracy among no-growth advocates."

In a statement at his confirmation hearing last week, Watt pledged not to have "any direct involvement in . . . the specifics of any particular case brought while I have been employed by the Mountain States Legal Foundation in which the foundation and the Department of Interior are parties." But that narrow lawyerese skirts the larger fact that James Watt's conflict of interest lies in his anti-conservation record cited above. No wonder his nomination has already precipitated several resignations at Interior, and environmental groups are gearing up for open opposition.

All these groups are well aware that the issue is whose interests the Interior Department will serve in the next four years. Interior, one of the less glamorous Cabinet posts, is nevertheless an extraordinarily powerful agency, in charge of the greatest share of the nation's publicly owned energy resources through control of more than 530 million acres of Western public land on which those resources are located. The advent of James Watt might galvanize his ideological antagonists into an activist opposition battling for the future of the West. BOB GOTTLIEB AND PETER WILEY

Bob Gottlieb and Peter Wiley are writing a book on politics and economic power in the Western Sun Belt, to be published by G. P. Putnam's, and a follow-up book on the Mormon Church. Research for this article was supported in part by the Fund for Investigative Journalism in Washington, D.C.

Under the Gun

With President Ronald Reagan upon us, the nation's 19- and 20-year-olds must decide how they will deal with the draft—and why. Since I was born in August 1959, I was narrowly spared the moral dilemma. But if the violent rhetoric of recent months ignites under a Republican President and Senate, the draft will surely be expanded to include me. Although the President-elect found it expedient to campaign against President Jimmy Carter's peacetime draft registration, Reagan seems more likely once in office to resort to military solutions—and he can also be expected to prosecute resisters of any eventual draft with far more gusto than would President Carter.

The possibility that registration will lead to a new draft certainly raises crucial questions for all Americans but special ones for those of us who will be under the gun. That our responses to these questions have been emotional and in some quarters simplistic may stem from a fresh realization of our essential powerlessness.

I was a small child in the 1960s and breathed a premature sigh of relief when it seemed as if my generation might fall between wars. Surely Vietnam was crazy enough to keep us at peace for decades. Now, for the sake of oil, "honor" and the "balance of power," we are ready to begin again. My generation may become the first to fight and die to make the world safe for polyester.

But the draft raises other questions for us that we tend to forget in the heat of our protest. Foes of the draft who are white, middle class and relatively privileged would do well to ponder their motives. We, who in past drafts might have had scholastic exemptions, may find no legal dodge this time, and a less hospitable Canada. Is our moral outrage just a smokescreen concealing an unwillingness to be inconvenienced in our career plans—or even simple physical fear? Moreover, if our broader opposition to military conscription is a genuinely principled stand, why then were we silent when it was mainly the poor and black who constituted the "volunteer" Army? The lack of opportunity offered by the American economy often gave them little choice but to enlist.

Last year, when Afghan was still a word for sweaters and hounds, a Junior R.O.T.C. program was established by the New York City Board of Education at Julia Richman High School in Manhattan. It is no coincidence that pro-military propaganda and recruitment on school time were inaugurated in a largely black public school, but there was nary a peep from affluent, liberal youth—or adults for that matter. We didn't respond until the issue touched *us*.

There is a more basic question here as well: Can the Government demand of its young citizens some kind of compulsory service? My gut reaction is no. I have plans of my own, and they include neither defoliating the Afghan countryside nor serving a Peace Corps stint south of the Equator. But this does not speak to the issue. Does not a citizen have a duty to preserve and protect his or her country? Or to serve it in some way?

I don't know. Peaceful community service as an alternative to enlistment—an issue that cannot be fully considered amid the recent "Soviet-menace" hysteria—is probably best left to individual motivation. A healthy society will produce young people who want to do good in the world without having to be dragooned by statute.

And if the nation were seriously threatened—if there were a clear and present danger of invasion—I doubt there would be any trouble raising an army from every facet of society. I would be there. I am not a theoretical pacifist; in Israel, where wars have been fought for literal survival, I would surely serve. But America's wars have seldom if ever been battles for survival. The causes have been more complex, the national motivations more pernicious. We have meddled in the affairs of sovereign nations, and we meet an uneasy international scene today with a heightened xenophobia.

All of this makes me a practical pacifist in America.

These are not complete answers. But many of us aren't even raising the questions. JEFF TRACHTMAN

Jeff Trachtman, a senior in politics at New York University, is managing editor of The Villager *in New York City.*

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VARIATIONS.

CALVIN TRILLIN

Another week has passed without my being invited to the de la Rentas. Even that overstates my standing. Until I read in *The New York Times Magazine* a couple of weeks ago about the de la Rentas having become "barometers of what constitutes fashionable society" ("Françoise and Oscar de la Renta have created a latter-day salon for *le nouveau grand monde*—the very rich, very powerful and very gifted"), I wasn't even aware of what I wasn't being invited to week after week. Once I knew, of course, it hurt.

Every time the phone rang, I thought it might be Mrs. de la Renta with an invitation ("Mr. Trillin? Françoise de la Renta here. We're having a few very rich, very powerful, and/or very gifted people over Sunday evening to celebrate Tisha B'av, and we thought you and the missus might like to join us"). The phone rang. It was the lady from the Diners' Club informing me how quickly a person's credit rating can deteriorate. The phone rang. It was my mother calling from Kansas City to ask if I'm sure I sent a thank-you note to my Cousin Edna for the place setting of stainless Edna and six other cousins went in on for our wedding gift in 1965. The phone rang. An invitation! Fats Goldberg, the pizza baron, asked if we'd like to bring the kids to his uptown branch Sunday night to sample the sort of pizza he regularly describes as "a gourmet tap-dance."

"Thanks, Fat Person, but I'll have to phone you," I said. "We may have another engagement Sunday."

The phone quit ringing.

"Why aren't I in *le nouveau grand monde*?" I asked my wife, Alice.

"Because you speak French with a Kansas City accent?" she asked in return.

"Not at all," I said. "Sam Spiegel, the Hollywood producer, is a regular at the de la Rentas, and I hear that the last time someone asked him to speak French he said 'Gucci.' "

"Why would you want to go there anyway?" Alice said. "Didn't you read that the host is so phony he added his own 'de la' to what had been plain old Oscar Renta?"

"Who can blame a man for not wanting to go through life sounding like a taxi driver?" I said. "Family background's not important in *le nouveau grand monde.* Diana Vreeland says Henry Kissinger is the star. The Vicomtesse de Ribes says 'Françoise worships intelligence.' You get invited by accomplishment—taking over a perfume company, maybe, or invading Cambodia."

"Why don't we just call Fats and tell him we'll be there for a gourmet tap-dance?" Alice said.

"Maybe it would help if you started wearing dresses designed by Oscar de la Renta," I said. "Some of his guests say they would feel disloyal downing Mrs. d's chicken fricassee while wearing someone else's merchandise."

Alice shook her head. "Oscar de la Renta designs those ruffly dresses that look like what the fat girl made a bad mistake wearing to the prom," she said.

"Things were a lot easier when fashionable society was limited to old-rich goyim, and all the rest of us didn't have to worry about being individually rejected," I said.

"At least they knew better than to mingle socially with their dressmakers," Alice said.

Would I be ready if the de la Rentas phoned? The novelist Jerzy Kosinski, after all, told *The Times* that evenings with them were "intellectually demanding." Henry Kissinger, the star himself, said that the de la Rentas set "an interesting intellectual standard"—although, come to think of it, that phrase could also be applied to Fats Goldberg.

Alone at the kitchen table, I began to polish my dinner-table chitchat, looking first to the person I imagined being seated on my left (the Vicomtesse de Ribes, who finds it charming that her name reminds me of barbecue joints in Kansas City) and then to the person on my right (Barbara Walters, another regular, who has tried to put me at my ease by confessing that in French she doesn't do her r's terribly well). "I was encouraged when it leaked that the Reagan Cabinet was going to be made up of successful managers from the world of business," I say, "but I expected them all to be Japanese."

Barbara and the Vicomtesse smile. Alice, who had just walked into the kitchen, looked concerned.

"Listen," Alice said. "I read in *The Times* that Mrs. de la Renta is very strict about having only one of each sort of person at a dinner party. Maybe they already have someone from Kansas City."

Possible. Jerzy Kosinski mentioned that Mrs. d is so careful about not including more than one stunning achiever from each walk of life ("she understands that every profession generates a few princes or kings") that he and Norman Mailer have never been at the de la Rentas on the same evening ("when I arrive, I like to think that, as a novelist, I'm unique"). Only one fabulous beauty. Only one world-class clotheshorse.

Then I realized that the one-of-each rule could work to my advantage. As I envisioned it, Henry Kissinger phones Mrs. d only an hour before dinner guests are to arrive. He had been scheduled to pick up fifteen grand that night for explaining SALT II to the Vinyl Manufacturers Association convention in Chicago, but the airports are snowed in. He and Nancy will be able to come to dinner after all. "How marvelous, darling!" Mrs. d says.

She hangs up and suddenly looks stricken. "My God!" she says to Oscar. "What are we going to do? We already have one war criminal coming!"

What to do except to phone the man who conflicts with the star and tell him the dinner had to be called off because Mr. d had come down with a painful skin disease known as the Seventh Avenue Shpilkes. What to do about the one male place at the table now empty—between Vicomtesse de Ribes and Barbara Walters?

The phone rings. "This is Françoise de la Renta," the voice says.

"This is Calvin of the Trillin," I say. "I'll be right over."

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ARTICLES.

IRAN AFTER THE SHAH

Balance Sheet On a Revolution

RICHARD FALK

In our preoccupation with the situation of the American hostages, we tend to forget that the revolution in Iran is now two years old. It is an appropriate time to analyze the Government's achievements, as well as its shortcomings. For despite the confrontation with the United States, growing political disunity at home and the invasion by Iraq, the revolution survives and continues.

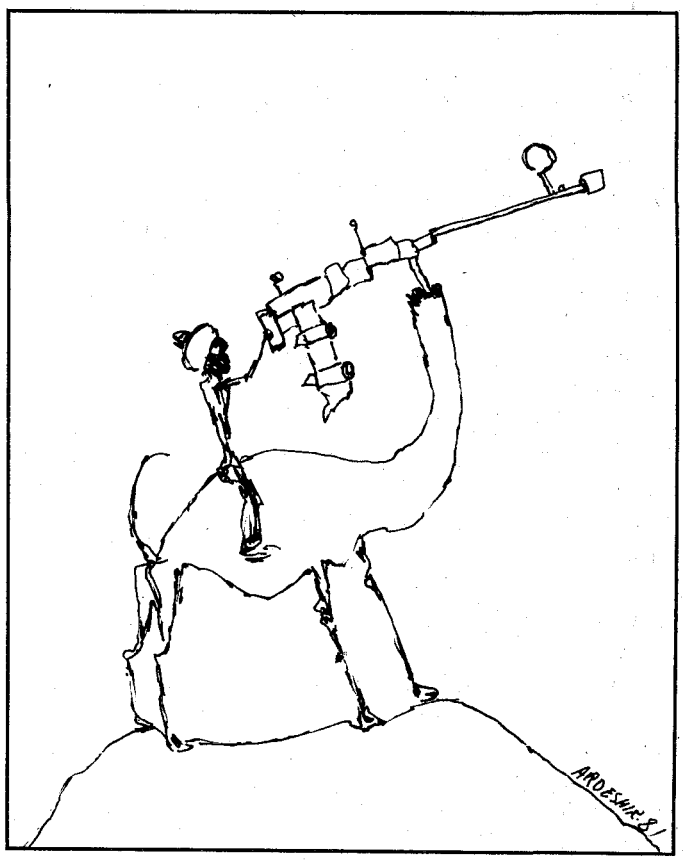
The war with Iraq has given the Iranian revolution a rare second chance to avoid a descent into religious fundamentalism. There is no doubt that Abolhassan Bani-Sadr's role as leader of the defense effort has strengthened his position with the armed forces and the Iranian masses. The effect has been to shift much of the revolutionary energy away from the Islamic Republican Party's empty program of seizing control of the state and imposing its austere regimen of Koranic literalism upon the whole of Iranian society. At this point, the outcome of the internal struggle, which will determine the shape of post-revolutionary Iranian politics, is again very much in doubt.

Certainly, at this juncture, the rainbow of revolutionary victory has faded in Iran. Revolutionary unity has disappeared, diplomatic isolation has deepened, Iranian territory has been invaded and partially occupied and some elements of authoritarian rule have re-emerged. Emblematic of the overall situation, perhaps, is the shift in position of the People's Mojahedin Organization, an Islamic socialist political formation, from the front rank of the revolution in February 1979 to the position of enemy of the Islamic Republic by the summer of 1980. The situation in Iran remains unclear and all crystal balls seem clouded over.

Some deteriorations can be observed. From the beginning, the Khomeini leadership seemed overly lax about democratic rights. Despite anguished protests from the first Prime Minister, Mehdi Bazargan, the Iranian revolutionary leadership proceeded with a long series of secret trials and hasty executions in which the defendants were denied basic rights. These bloody executions have continued, although at a much abated rate, not only against alleged collaborators with the Shah but also against participants in ethnic autonomy movements (especially Kurds, Azerbaijanis, Turkomans), social deviants (prostitutes, homosexuals, adulterers, narcotics dealers) and, indeed, anyone accused and convicted of engaging in anti-state activities. The recent resignation under pressure of the notorious Ayatollah Khalkali, the "hanging judge" who had roved Iran as a virtual chief inquisitor, is a hopeful sign that Bani-Sadr may be gaining the upper hand in his valiant effort to move the Islamic Republic in a genuine constitutional direction that rests on due process, bureaucratic restraint and respect for the human rights of opponents.

Along the same lines, many of the local *komitehs* (committees) have been reckless in their ways, punishing in an arbitrary, ruthless fashion and generating an atmosphere of intimidation. Technical abuses of Islamic codes, such as drinking, have produced floggings. This general experience quickly undermined the confidence that post-Shah Iran would, at the very least, achieve an atmosphere of freedom at the local level.

Early on, after the Pahlevi collapse, former deputy director of Savak, Gen. Hossein Fordoust, was entrusted with the formation, staffing and direction of a new internal-security apparatus, known as Savama. And it seems by now well documented that Savama operates secretly, without standards of democratic accountability, causing anxieties and accusations about abuses of rights similar to those aroused by the hated Savak, although on a much smaller scale so far. Ironically, also, many of the victims of the former regime are now treated as the enemies of the new order.



DRAWINGS BY ARDESHIR MOHASSESS

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Additional areas of concern exist. The Constitution of the Islamic Republic, as finally adopted, has many anti-democratic features, especially the near absolute power of the Faqhi, or religious guide, to abridge rights, dismiss elected officials, dissolve representative institutions. Perhaps hyperbolically, the new Constitution has been called "a regression," compared to the 1906 Constitution kept in place during the Pahlevi period, and the new order has already been called by some, "fascist."

Policies adopted toward non-Persian minorities have also aroused concern. Although controversy surrounds vital facts on such matters, and the reality of foreign meddling cannot be ignored, it remains the case that the response of the Islamic Republic to claims for minority rights and status has, at times, been repressive in a manner reminding seasoned observers of the Shah's approach. Of course, various ethnic groups in Iran, sensing the fluidity of the post-revolutionary situation, saw the moment as opportune to put forth their maximum demands, acting sometimes in a provocative and belligerent manner to promote their autonomy. Such ethnic assertions were, in turn, perceived "at the center" to be deeply "anti-revolutionary" and "anti-state" in their intention and effect. At times, the Iranian revolutionary leadership has seemed forthcoming toward minorities, going far, especially as measured by Iranian history, to meet autonomy demands. There have been additional charges of abuse made by and on behalf of Iranian Bahais and Jews. Bahais, viewed by Shiia Islam as heretics, have been under constant pressure since the end of the revolution. Some Bahai shrines have been desecrated and certain punishments inflicted solely because the individuals were prominent Bahais. Jews, while officially assured of a protected place in an Islamic Republic and even awarded a seat in the new Parliament, have been worried by anti-Zionist sentiments. There have been some incidents of harassment in Iran based only on the Jewish identity of the targets. Several prominent members of the Jewish community have been executed on charges that they were strong, active supporters of Israel.

A further charge involves the treatment of women. The struggle against the Shah was not only supported by the great majority of Iranian women but their decisive role was unprecedented for a Third World revolution, or, for that matter, *any* revolution. In the aftermath of victory, some of the liberalizing features of the Shah's Westernized policies have been evidently lost. Iranian women are allegedly being forced back into their traditional abject subordination by the fundamentalism of the Islamic Republic. In these respects, it certainly is true that for the first time in decades many women are being made to conform to strict codes of dress, are not expected to play roles in public arenas and are being denied a place in politics or education. Whether this temporary experience of betrayal will become a permanent feature of post-Pahlevi Iran remains in doubt. In any event, given the mass mobilization of Iranian women on behalf of the revolution, it seems likely that they will revive their struggle for liberation within the context of an Islamic Republic, if the constitutional approach of Bani-Sadr gains the upper hand, especially once the emergency atmosphere is ended.

On a more general level, the Islamic Republic seems to have moved in a dangerously repressive direction, whether it be in relation to the Marxist ideas of the left, the secular convictions of the urban constitutionalists, or the quest for more freedom in the areas of life style and cultural activities. Newspapers have been shut down, bookstores raided, schools and universities have been made to toe the Islamic line or closed. Serious scholars and administrators have often been replaced in universities and schools by semi-educated clerics or their lay flunkies.

Finally, there is the claim that the new Iran is contemptuous of international law. Foreign assassinations seem to have been carried out with apparent official sanction, most prominently against a nephew of the Shah in Paris in December 1979, and Ali Akbar Tabatabai, an anti-Khomeini leader living in the United States, in July 1980. More significant has been the unwillingness and inability of the Islamic Government to uphold the elementary principles of diplomatic immunity. Embassy sanctity has been violated on numerous occasions even aside from the occupation of the American Embassy since November 4, 1979. More serious was the retention of the fifty-three Americans (fifty-two since the release of Richard Queen) for so many months without even charges being pressed.

In addition to this enumeration of abuses, there is a gathering record of ineptitude, especially in the economic sphere. Large sectors of the Iranian economy, for example in building and industrial trades, remain idle. Unemployment is high and rising. Little energy has been devoted to reviving the economy, carrying out the promises of the revolution to equalize incomes and land tenure, evolving an industrial and agricultural order responsive to Iran's needs and resource endowments, including human skills. While many ordinary Iranians suffer and the middle classes fall into a state of growing despair, there has been at times an almost total preoccupation with the contentious revolutionary agenda. The Bani-Sadr/Ayatollah Beheshti struggle has intensified and polarized the leadership, an encounter of colliding revolutionary world views that immobilizes constructive efforts. Khomeini has appeared up to now, at least, to reject as "secular" these efforts on behalf of the Iranian people, thereby dooming measures aimed at re-establishing a semblance of post-revolutionary normalcy.

Finally, this post-Shah path of the Islamic Republic has been said to jeopardize both the gains of the Iranian revolution and the territorial and political independence of Iran. The hostage diplomacy has created a massive pretext for American intervention, indeed for intervention by an array of reactionary enemies of Iran. By stepping outside the protective shield of accepted international legality and morality—based on the minimum mutual respect for sovereign rights—the ruling factions in Iran have, in effect, provided aid and comfort to the various aggressive and interventionary initiatives by exiles, by neighboring

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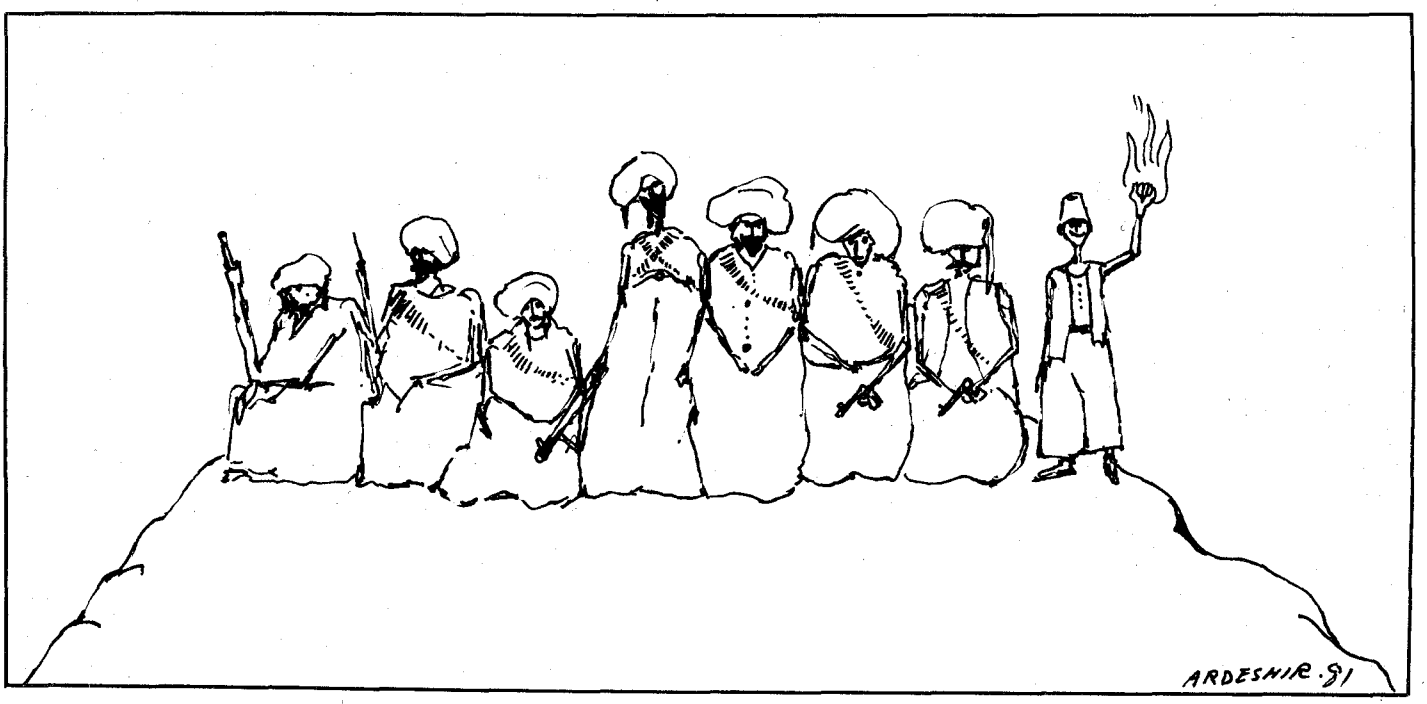
states and by the superpowers, especially the United States. These encounters, coming at a time of weakened military capability and internal disorder, may have placed even the victory over the Shah's militarist style of rule in some jeopardy, raising unnecessarily risks of warfare, military coup, civil war. In essence, then, a combination of ineptitude and fundamentalism has set the stage for either a slide into religious fascism or a reversion to some form of reactionary, militarized rule. Even if these extremes can be avoided, the loss of the main source of foreign exchange as a consequence of the war damage done to the oilfields can, in some sense, be attributed to Iranian revolutionary excess, without which Iraq would never have dared to attack.

Not all of this indictment needs—nor should—be accepted. Hostile reporting has been a dimension of the Iranian experience all along, often aggravated by deliberate manipulation of the news in a manner calculated to discredit the forces victorious against the Shah and American imperialism. The bad has been consistently exaggerated, the good ignored. Besides, Western secularism, whether of the left, right or center, is deeply distrustful of and frightened by religious politics; thereby, hostile perceptions often tend to be misleading. Such a tendency is underscored by cultural distance, especially in light of the anti-Western animus of Khomeini's outlook. Finally, revolutionary fervor never neatly accommodates liberal insistence on due process, fairness to enemies and rational moderation; the spirit and mood is different. The liberal critics in Iran are also those likely to have stayed near or on the sidelines during the revolutionary struggle itself because it seemed "hopeless," or because there was no point in being "rash" and "reckless."

There have been revolutionary achievements in Iran since February 1979, as well as failures. The Shah's structures of dependence and exploitation have been largely smashed. The unhealthy role of foreign enterprise has been severely curtailed. The Iranian oil industry has been put in the service of the Iranian people and their values. Progressive ends have been served—no more oil for South Africa, the Palestinian cause has been promoted, Iran has consistently supported Third World anti-imperial demands. Whatever else, the foreign policy of Iran in this period has been anti-rightist, even to the point of explicitly breaking off diplomatic relations with Pinochet's regime in Chile because of its repressive character. Furthermore, the Iranian victory and Khomeini's leadership have brought people of Islamic faith a new conviction of their worth and power, a momentous historic achievement whose full weight has not yet been felt. Recall that at Auschwitz the word "Moslem" was used by prisoners as concentration camp slang to designate the most totally intimidated and broken-spirited inmates, whose very debasement made them immediately eligible for the gas chamber. This Islamic resurgence, personified by the sanctified figure of Ayatollah Khomeini, has also struck fear into the hearts of regional tyrants and monarchs, as well as worrying those who rule their country, as does Anwar el-Sadat, in a manner calculated to bring dollars and praise from the West rather than the heartfelt support of his people.

Internally, there have also been achievements. Progress has been made in the agricultural sector, both as to increasing output and with respect to redistributing land to the poor. Other economic plans are in the works and may now, with the semblance, at last, of a functioning governing process, go forward with wide public support. Many experiments in worker control at the local level are succeeding in a dramatic fashion.

Elections, generally thought to be fair, have been held, often for the first time in decades, at the local and national levels. The presidential election, despite the disqualification of two strong candidates, seemed definitely to allow a range of candidates to compete openly for popular favor. Ayatollah Khomeini has generally acted in accordance with pop-



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ular will, especially as measured by the mass outlook of those who took the major risks in the streets during the many months of confrontation. Even endowing his own person with supreme powers in the redrafted new Constitution reflected democratic sentiment.

So far, many revolutionary excesses have been avoided or curtailed. Policies and practices abusive of minority rights, however lamentable in their reality, have been restricted within fairly narrow limits, even with respect to Bahais and Jews. The revolution has not, in the manner of major revolutions of the past, yet devoured its own; rather, it has tended to cast aside and even reassimilate leaders rejected along the way as "compromised" or "too moderate." For example, Mehdi Bazargan and Ibrahim Yazdi, members of the original moderate Cabinet back in early 1979 and for a while under intense pressure by revolutionary forces, have continued to play active, leading roles after falling from the pinnacles of power. Bani-Sadr also, after a shaky start, has held on as President and commander of the armed forces, receiving key backing from Khomeini in the early stages of his presidency whenever the clerics appeared to have clinched total victory. Bani-Sadr's active leadership during the war with Iraq has given him a mass base in Iran second only to Khomeini's.

The Iranian revolution has gone forward on its own momentum, defining its structures as it proceeds. It is a mass revolution, apparently scornful at this stage of the constitutional rights especially valued by the middle classes, and one inexperienced, to put it mildly, in democratic governance. The Islamic identity of the movement also supports the demands for vengeance and the harshly specified code of conduct; some revolutionary excesses are the product of decentralized, provincial Islamic extremism that does not reflect the will or policy of the center.

Outsiders have complained about the absence of "authority structures" in Iran, about their inability to identify who is in charge. American diplomats have been critical of this, especially in the frustrating months consumed by frantic efforts to resolve the hostage crisis. Yet this fragmentation of authority reflected a willingness of the leadership, including Khomeini, to allow the revolution to continue on after the Shah's collapse. It would be premature to condemn such a course. After all, the statist orientations of leaders around the world have not succeeded in protecting human rights or achieving peaceful international relations.

Although there are many reasons to be troubled by the evolving character of the Iranian revolution, it is still too soon to pass judgment. The record is more mixed than the American media allow, and the situation in Iran remains sufficiently fluid to make a progressive destiny still a distinct possibility, although by no means likely, much less assured. There is no doubt that Khomeini's early efforts to export the Iranian revolution were a disaster, causing just enough anxiety in the region to mobilize a counterrevolutionary consensus. The most bitter fruit of this revolutionary excess has clearly been the Iraqi invasion, supported by the main Arab states (except Syria) and acquiesced in, at least at the outset, by both superpowers beneath the banner of noninvolvement and neutrality. [See Falk, "America's Pro-Iraqi Neutrality," *The Nation*, October 25, 1980.] At the same time, the revolution's success in destroying once and for all the dynastic base of government in Iran remains a great popular victory. Revolutionary Iran, despite the factionalism and the failures to rebuild, has exhibited considerable loyalty to the central leadership in Teheran during the Iraqi invasion. Even the Arabs in Khuzistan remained loyal, by and large, and did not, as some expected, welcome the Iraqis as liberators. Just as Khomeini exaggerated the receptivity of other Moslem lands to an Islamic revolution, so Khomeini's enemies in the region and beyond have greatly overestimated Iran's receptivity to counterrevolution and its paralysis by way of domestic chaos.

The advent of the Reagan Presidency coincides with a new period of revolutionary regrouping in Iran. It seems evident that the Iraqi invasion, the inability of the Islamic Republican Party to move ahead with economic reconstruction and the repressive burdens of religious fundamentalists, as well as the demonstrations of Bani-Sadr's competence and popularity, have started to cause splits among the religious leaders. More and more prominent religious figures are declaring their independence of Beheshti and the I.R.P., and even siding with Bani-Sadr. There is a growing awareness in Iran that you can't eat religious slogans, nor can you substitute, in a war, revolutionary enthusiasm for weapons and training. Whether this redress of forces is sufficient to avoid civil strife is not yet clear, nor is Khomeini's approach to this new stage of the Iranian revolution. Important, also, will be the Reagan Administration's approach, whether prudent or confrontational. Especially if it finally rids itself of the hostage albatross, the Iranian revolution is probably now in a better position to move ahead constructively than at any time since its victory over the Shah became final in early February 1979. □

HOW NOT TO NEGOTIATE

Crossed Signals On the Hostages

WILLIAM O. BEEMAN

As you read this, the hostages may be free, or else negotiations have broken down once again, meaning that the Reagan Administration will have to take over the reins. A change in administrations in the middle of a delicate operation such as the hostage negotiations can afford the opportunity for a new approach unencumbered by the past, or it can result in a debacle through ignorance and insensitivity. Whether the crisis is now history or Reagan's ball game, we should study how the Carter Administration's failures contributed to prolonging it.

Carter's principal mistake in dealing with Iran has been

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his extraordinary passivity. This sluggishness probably arose from his reluctance to risk failure in such a volatile political situation with an election in the offing. Aggressiveness to the Carter White House, in fact, seemed to mean only one thing—military action. But this was the one kind of aggressiveness that was doomed to failure since it would only strengthen Iranian resistance to any compromise with the United States.

What Washington has never seemed to acknowledge in its policy on the hostages is that Teheran's chief spokesmen were hampered in negotiating by their continual need to protect their own domestic political flanks while dealing with the "Great Satan" in Washington. As a result of their need to avoid alienating their own supporters, they prolonged the hostage crisis beyond their own ability to control it. Their need to avoid the appearance of compromise has made it almost impossible for them to find an end-game that will leave their fragile power base intact.

The Carter Administration, ignoring all this, tended to insist that Iran play by Washington's rules governing how negotiations are carried out. When the Iranians responded with a style of negotiation cast in their own political and cultural mold, the U.S. diplomatic machinery went haywire. The Iranians, who have never ceased acting in a perfectly predictable and logical manner within Iranian cultural contexts, were declared "irrational," "insane," "unpredictable," "deviant" and "criminal" by some of the coolest of American political leaders. Such epithets did not, of course, move the negotiations forward. Rather, they gave Iran an opening to level invective against Washington. Moreover, anyone skilled in the rudiments of cross-cultural communication knows that such words are coded expressions of one's inability or unwillingness to understand the other party's state of mind.

If Carter had really wanted to understand Iran, he would not have made his second mistake: he would not have waited for nearly six months to consult with experts on Iran and Iranians. Even when these consultations finally took place, they were held in the depths of the State Department's research sections, far away from the true center of foreign policy decision making during this period—the White House. Neither the White House staff nor the National Security Council ever took adequate advantage of the vast resources of expertise on Iran that exist in the United States.

Iran experts sat at home watching in chagrin and horror as opportunity after opportunity was missed through sheer ignorance on the part of the White House on when to move, what to say to whom, when to react and how to dodge and weave. Although they had repeatedly urged that the United States undertake an independent investigation of the former Shah's wealth and financial dealings within the United States, their advice was ignored. The result was Iran's pre-Christmas demand that more than $10 billion be placed in escrow until such an investigation was completed.

And the entire community of Iranian experts, it goes without saying, was aghast at the incredible incompetence of the aborted rescue attempt. Political and cultural considerations aside, the physical planning itself was a tactical disaster. It was clear that the planners did not even know the rudiments of negotiating the streets of Teheran. Even had the helicopters not failed, the ground rescue vehicles could never have made it to the embassy at the appointed hour. They would have become hopelessly enmeshed in the predawn traffic of the wholesale produce trade.

In unthinkable situations, unthinkable remedies must be tried. Washington was counseled by experts to address itself to the needs and the concerns of the Iranian mass public, rather than holding to the usual Western practice of diplomatic negotiations with a few elite leaders. But rather than act on this advice, Carter, through a direct executive order, stepped up harassment of Iranian students in the United States, causing anti-U.S. feelings in Iran to escalate to unprecedented heights. This in turn dashed any hopes that Iranian sympathy for the plight of the hostages or their families could generate political pressure on Teheran's leaders.

Experts also advised that public negotiations take place between the United States and Iran, in order to spare Iranian officials from the charges of collusion that private meetings might incur. But in dogged fashion, U.S. leaders continued to send private messages to Teheran, only to be embarrassed when they were made public and converted to propaganda. And recently the revolutionary Government in Iran received another tremendous domestic propaganda boost by being able to broadcast its own "final" $24 billion response before the United States had made public its earlier offer. Washington's proposal was finally revealed on December 28, 1980, by Teheran, with significant portions deleted to portray the Iranian Government's position in the most favorable light to its citizens.

Carter's third mistake was to ignore the exhilarating sense of power the Iranian people had following the revolution. For most Iranians the revolution was the single most significant event of their lives; it was the first time they felt in control of their own destiny. To denigrate the revolution or dismiss its values is tantamount to blasphemy in Iran even now.

In this light, Ayatollah Khomeini, far from being a dictator, derives his authority from public consensus. His actions must conform to his public's expectations. His skill as a leader lies in controlling the dynamic relationship between government acts and public opinion. He faces resistance within Iran today from a population which increasingly feels that the Islamic Republic has failed to measure up to the promise of the revolution. This domestic unrest puts additional pressure on him to avoid acts which could be construed as a betrayal of the sacred revolutionary principles

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which brought him to power. Because one of these principles is resistance of illegitimate external force to the point of martyrdom, there is little that Washington can do in the way of conventional pressures to make him or other revolutionary leaders accept a solution—especially if it appears to be imposed from abroad.

Even if Iranians could be convinced that a settlement on Washington's terms might benefit them, on a symbolic and spiritual basis, Khomeini cannot bow to U.S. demands. This would be a betrayal of himself and his revolution, and the people could not accept it: they would oust the present regime. Thus, for Carter to have placed arguments for the release of the hostages in terms of U.S. law, international diplomatic principles, the United Nations Charter, or any other moral or legal framework save the Iranian revolution itself was a tactical error guaranteed to insure continued resistance.

The Carter Administration's fourth mistake was to choose an incorrect framework for dealing with the crisis. The Iranian hostage crisis will go down in history as the first great challenge to the postwar doctrine of bipolar, superpower geopolitics.

Above all things, Iran desires to be an independent nation treated with the respect due a sovereign state. It desires to fall neither under the domination of the United States nor the Soviet Union, of whom it has a historic dread. This created an anomaly for American leaders—a country that existed outside the Soviet bloc but that would not pander to U.S. interests in any way: a nonaligned, sovereign state.

As the dispute between the United States and Iran simmered, the bipolar model continued to influence Washington's actions. When Carter eliminated all of Iran's economic and political connections with America's principal allies, Iran turned to whoever would help, in this case Libya and Syria, who fall, by U.S. reckoning, into the Soviet camp. Thus, shortly before the November elections last year, ex-President Gerald Ford, when asked whether the United States should help Iran in the Iraqi conflict, replied that since Iran was allied with Algeria, Libya and Syria, any further assistance from the United States would be unthinkable. Clearly, we were ignoring our strategic and economic interests in renewed relations with Iran because of a Syrian and Libyan alliance that we were responsible for in the first place. And we were getting nowhere with the hostages. The bipolar analysis is no longer relevant.

It may not be too soon to ask what the chances are for the Reagan Administration to avoid the traps that Carter fell into. Although hopes are always strong at the outset of a new administration, the prognosis for Reagan unfortunately does not look good.

Reagan, if the negotiations should carry over, may benefit from the experience of outgoing Secretary of State Edmund Muskie, who managed to make more progress than had been achieved in the entire year preceding. But the prognosis for his making effective use of our own storehouse of expertise on Iran remains poor. A quick poll of the experts most respected for their knowledge of Iranian political and cultural affairs reveals that the Reagan transition team had called none of them. (These include such authorities as: Marvin Zonis, assistant professor of political science at the University of Chicago and former head of its Middle East Center; James Bill, professor of political science at the University of Texas in Austin and former head of its Middle East Center; Nikki Keddie, president of the Middle East Studies Association of North America and professor of history at the University of California at Los Angeles; Catherine Bateson, dean of the faculty at Amherst College; Michael Fischer, associate professor of anthropology, Harvard University, and Thomas Ricks, associate professor of history, Georgetown University.) If the incoming Administration believes it can continue negotiations without benefit of detailed knowledge of Iranian cultural and political dynamics, it will be quickly disillusioned and is destined to repeat the mistakes of its predecessor.

And Reagan's recent characterization of the Iranians as "barbarians" is simply more of the same name-calling we heard in the first weeks of the confrontation, when the Carter people fumbled in *their* attempts to get a handle on the situation. It does not bode well for the future of the hostages or of U.S.-Iranian relations. Reagan will have to deal with Iran as it is rather than the "barbarians" of his rhetoric if the crisis is to be ended without further stalemate, and without violence. □

BIG MULLAHS & BLACK HOLES

The Iranian Assets Grab

JONATHAN M. WINER

By his handling of the freeze of Iranian assets in the United States at the outset of the hostage crisis, President Carter mired the negotiations for their release in a legal morass. There is, of course, a long chain of "ifs" in the entire affair, but one that rose up to haunt the most recent negotiations need never have happened, namely, Carter's decision to relinquish U.S. Government control over the assets when he imposed the freeze on November 14, 1979.

Because of the Administration's failure to retain control of the assets, the legal difficulties of meeting even arguably legitimate Iranian claims were enormously magnified. It has been said that the Iranian Government's "outrageous" demand for $24 billion in what the politicians were quick to label "ransom" was partially prompted by the revolutionary Government's need to placate the hard-liners. But by the same token, Jimmy Carter has had not only domestic public opinion in an election year to worry about but also Iran's creditors in this country and, pre-eminently, the large international banks, which took advantage of the

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freeze to gobble up huge chunks of Iranian deposits as insurance against nonpayment of loans they made in the Shah's day. Why Carter did not make the one move that would have freed Iranian assets from a tangled web of claims is an intriguing question in itself and one whose answer may be found in concrete pressures from Wall Street rather than the Administration's patented ineptitude. Be that as it may, a review of how the Iranian assets became fair game for banks and creditors is instructive.

In the days before the Iranian seizure of the American Embassy in Teheran, two groups in the United States had special reason to worry about possible harmful effects of the Iranian revolution on their interests. One consisted of executives at various international banks with headquarters in the United States. These banks, of which perhaps the most exposed was Chase Manhattan, had loaned large sums of money to the Shah, and still had on deposit hundreds of millions of dollars in Iranian assets. Their executives feared that agents of Ayatollah Khomeini might order Iranian banks and corporations to withdraw all deposits from the U.S. banks. If they did so, the banks might find it impossible to force Iran to pay back huge outstanding loans as they came due. These loans had been negotiated with the Shah, largely to pay for the purchase of military equipment. Moreover, the banks had reason to believe that not all the loans were in accordance with Iranian banking laws. If this became known and the money lost, the banks' officers would be vulnerable to stockholder suits. Finally, Chase Manhattan, and David Rockefeller in particular, were considered enemies of the revolution because of their support for the Shah. The bankers' fears were thus not unrealistic.

The second group with reason to fret about the economic and political consequences of the Iranian revolution consisted of American businesses that had sold technology and services to Iran on credit. As Iran delayed payments on its debts and issued threats that it would pay only "legitimate" foreign claims, the creditors grew nervous. If Iran repudiated its debts, they might be unable to do anything about it since the Government of Iran and many of its nationally owned businesses appeared protected from any attachment of their assets by the Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act. The act, passed by Congress in 1976, governs most commercial transactions between foreign governments and U.S. businesses. It also provides a variety of protections to those governments from legal actions in the United States. A few creditors went ahead and sued, but most waited to see what would happen.

What happened, of course, was the freeze. The banks acted almost immediately. Several days after President Carter's order immobilizing all Iranian assets in the United States, Iran's central bank, Bank Markazi, was due to make an interest payment of $4 million on a $500 million loan extended by a consortium of banks headed by Chase. Ordinarily, this interest would have been paid out of assets deposited with Chase by the Bank Markazi. But Chase claimed the freeze made payment impossible. Before the payment came due, Chase and Citibank declared Iran in default and thus liable for the entire principal of the loan. They then proceeded to take all the money Bank Markazi had on deposit at their London and Paris branches to make good the "default."

But Chase was confronted by a problem: Bank Markazi did not itself have sufficient deposits in Chase's foreign branches to cover the amount of the defaulted loan. So it declared, under what lawyers for the banks later called "The Big Mullah Theory," that assets of all business entities of Iran be deemed equivalent and interchangeable. According to the Big Mullah theory, all Iranian corporations could be treated as a single pot of money since they all appeared to be operated at the top by the same religious leaders. Chase, therefore, claimed the right to take not only all assets that the Bank Markazi had deposited in its overseas branches (actually, only dollars were frozen) but all other Iranian assets located in these branches. In a private, ex parte, extrajudicial action, Chase took an Iranian nest egg here, another there and piled them into its own single basket. There was a precedent of sorts for this act: under the Shah, the niceties of corporation structure were often ignored and funds shuffled from one corporation to another according to Pahlevi whim.

Lawyers representing Iran in this country in suits against Chase argue that the bank could have rather easily avoided declaring Bank Markazi in default by taking the $4 million out of funds being held in its overseas offices. That move would have given the consortium all the money that, strictly speaking, it was entitled to on the day of the Carter freeze. It also would have prevented the current complications. But the freeze only prevented Iran from withdrawing its dollars from the European branches of the U.S.-based banks, not its holdings in other currencies.

And so Chase's actions set off a stampede. The other member banks in the consortium began taking their own Big Mullah compensations, or "offsets," against Iran's debt in Europe. Not content with taking only enough to cover their individual shares of the loan, they each seized all the assets they could find—pounds, marks, francs *and* dollars—up to a $500 million limit, Iran's total debt to the consortium. The banks justified this act under another controversial theory dubbed "The Black Hole Setoff" by a bank lawyer. Because all of the banks in the consortium would share in the losses arising out of the failure of any particular bank to get back its part of the principal, the theory goes, each may attempt to collect as much of the entire loan as it can.

In effect, the banks had declared a free-for-all on Iranian assets in Europe. This was exemplified by the U.S. banks' subsequent attachments of such unusual Iranian assets as a 25 percent interest in Germany's Krupp steel. This melee both frightened European bankers and angered European governments. The former saw an unknown number of foreign (Iranian) holdings of U.S. dollars suddenly removed from the European money market. The latter felt their sovereignty had been breached by predatory banks.

Back in the United States, things were even more complicated. Lawyers for the international banks began seeking court attachments of frozen Iranian assets held in their

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domestic branches. The attachments, granted wholesale by the courts, would prevent Iran from removing the assets immediately upon the ending of the freeze. The banks also began attaching assets in the branches of other banks. Iran would later argue that all these attachments were improper under the Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act. In the meantime, American commercial creditors raced to the courts to attach any Iranian assets they could locate; any creditor who failed to do so might later find its Iranian debtor a corporate skeleton, picked clean by its other creditors. The attachments insured that neither the U.S. Government nor Iran could remove the Iranian funds without considering the rights of the creditors. However, it left these creditors waiting not only for a political settlement between the United States and Iran but also upon the outcome of complex litigation taking many years.

In sum, the European offsets and the European and American attachments and litigation tied up about 75 percent of the Iranian assets affected by Carter's freeze. The banks were left holding billions while everyone else was forced to await a hypothetical future repayment subject to the results of lengthy litigation in the courts. In the meantime, lawyers representing the banks could pursue further protective actions at their leisure. In contrast to the United States, Iran, the hostages and the American commercial creditors, Chase and its fellow banks had placed themselves in the position of having everything to gain by court tie-ups and nothing to lose.

Yet the Carter Administration could have prevented all this if the President had ordered a suspension of all claims against Iran under the same International Emergency Economic Powers Act by which he ordered the freeze, and made all foreign bank setoffs subject to Presidential approval. Instead, on the day of the freeze, the Treasury Department issued a regulation specifically authorizing the banks to take the setoffs, although not necessarily the super-setoffs they subsequently made under the Big Mullah theory. Why the freeze order was amended to permit the banks to take the setoffs has never been explained by the Carter Administration. A senior litigator at one Wall Street law firm told this reporter that the amendment was made "under pressure" from the banks.

Having lost control of the funds, the U.S. Government's subsequent legal actions were weak. It conducted a census of all Iranian assets and claims on those assets last May, the results of which remain secret. And, second, it requested stays in the approximately 340 individual proceedings involving Iran in eighteen Federal District Courts.

The limits on the flexibility of the United States in dealing with Iran, given the entanglement of the assets by the offsets, attachments and lawsuits, have become clear. America had the choice of paying Iran "ransom," or freeing Iran's assets from the many claims of non-Iranians. To accomplish the latter, the U.S. Government had to regain control of the assets. Justice Department lawyers ransacked the law libraries for precedents that would enable them to do so, but what they unearthed appeared to be of dubious value. There was, for example, the Hostage Act of 1868, which was passed in response to Britain's seizure of American citizens during hostilities following the Civil War. The act states "Whenever it is made known to the President that any citizen of the United States has been unjustly deprived of his liberty by a foreign government, the President shall use such means, not amounting to acts of war, as he may think necessary and proper to obtain or effectuate the release.' The statute has been dormant since its passage, however. But all this was irrelevant: under the Emergency Economic Powers Act Carter had the power to "void" the attachments and "transfer" the assets to Iran.

As it made obvious in its $24 billion demand, Iran was insistent that the United States reimburse it directly, letting our Government worry about getting repaid by untangling the assets. Iran's position is understandable. Even if every U.S. court were eventually to decide that Iran's assets should have been immune from attachment and judgment under the protections of the Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act, the claim is one that might take years to litigate. The act may well be decisive, and lawyers for both Iran and its creditors have many good arguments that it is, but this can only be determined by the courts, not the President.

One idea proposed by both the United States and Iran was the establishment of an international arbitration body that would remove all claims from the jurisdiction of the U.S. courts. But a move to invalidate the lawsuits in the United States would still be subject to constitutional challenges by creditors on grounds that denying them the right to sue would constitute a violation of the Fifth Amendment's proscriptions against taking property without due process of law and fair compensation. The Federal Government could be compelled to reimburse any creditors who manage to convince the courts that they have a right to bring their lawsuits through to judgment regardless of Presidential demands for stays. (So far, three creditors have won multimillion-dollar judgments against Iran. The remainder of the suits are stayed.)

The settlement that would be most beneficial to both the United States and Iran would be one that secures the quick release of the preponderance of Iran's assets yet provides a mechanism for paying the legitimate claims of Iran's commercial creditors, as well as interest on the bank loans according to the schedule originally called for by the loan agreements. The settlement would closely resemble Iran's recent negotiating package, minus the demand for the return of the Shah's chimerical $10 billion, and up to $4 billion in possible unmeritorious claims.

If the United States had kept its grip on all the assets affected by the freeze, it might well have been able to meet those terms as easily as the Iranians have contended. Unfortunately, the President failed to hold on to the assets when he froze them. What once looked like the most effective way for the U.S. Government to put pressure on Iran to return the hostages had become in one year the most serious impediment preventing their return. For future historians of the affair, the question of why it happened remains. □

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FILL 'ER UP YOURSELF

Big Oil Steps on The Independent Gas Dealers

FRED J. COOK

In New Jersey, Route 3, which carries hundreds of thousands of travelers yearly from the Lincoln Tunnel to the sports complex at the Meadowlands, is one of the most heavily traveled roads in the nation. But if you are taking it, keep your fingers crossed that nothing goes wrong with your car's engine. If it does, you're stuck. You can't get it fixed. Oh, there are plenty of gas stations, but there isn't a service bay open or a mechanic on duty at any of them. "This is the most dramatic example I can think of to show what is going on," says Jerry Ferrara, executive director of the New Jersey Gasoline Retailers Association.

What is going on is another power play by the big oil companies. This time they're seeking to forge a chain of monopoly that will stretch from the well through refinery to point of sale at the local gas station. An official of the Allied Gasoline Retailers Association of Florida charges that the majors, working through the American Petroleum Institute, are mounting a drive to wrest total ownership of stations from independent dealers by 1982. Ferrara sees the same forces at work in New Jersey, and the experiences of gas retailers in Florida and New Jersey are typical of what is happening in many other parts of the nation. [See James Gannon, "How Gulf Dealt Its Dealers Out," *The Nation*, February 24, 1979.] Some 6,000 independent stations have been forced out of business in New Jersey since 1973, Ferrara says. In Florida, the number is put at 4,000. In New Jersey, according to Ferrara, although there are fewer stations, there are more self-service stations and more company-owned stations, symbols of the changing times.

What happens to drive the independent gas dealer to the wall? Many things. The key to the power play may be found in the leasing arrangements. (According to Joel R. Jacobson, New Jersey's energy commissioner, 70 percent of the stations in the state are either owned outright by the majors or controlled by them through leasing deals that lead to all kinds of gimmicks.) "Leases are now coming up for renewal," Ferrara says, "and the rents are being increased on an average of 70 percent over last year. I have copies of about 1,000 contracts sent to dealers. I have on my desk right now a proposed contract in which the rent would be hiked 100 percent."

One ruse being resorted to by the major companies, Ferrara says, is the stipulation in the lease that the dealer must close his service bays and sell only gas and oil. If he agrees to this, his rent will be pegged at $1,000 a month. If he balks and wants to continue servicing his clientele, his rent will be $2,000 a month. "This may look like a good deal to the station owner," Ferrara says, "but if he accepts this 'bargain,' he will find the next time his lease comes up for renewal that his rent has been boosted again, and he can't make it."

The gas station dealer used to rely on a few cents a gallon profit from the sale of gasoline to pay his overhead; his own profit came from the service and repair work he did in his bays. "Under this system," Ferrara says, "there is no way he can make it. He is being put in a terrible squeeze. In one case I have on my desk, the rent went from $1,000 to $2,100, from $2,100 to $3,500 and now to $4,500. In another case —this is a small station—the rent began at $720, went to $1,250, then to $1,550 and finally to $1,850—all in the last four years. This station pumps only about 25,000 gallons a month and there is no way he can pay this kind of rent. I call it economic strangulation."

Economic strangulation takes various forms. For instance, a representative of the Allied Gasoline Retailers Association of Florida charges that some seventy independent stations, all leased from a corporation that is a front for Big Oil, have been hit with demands like these: they must purchase $10,000 worth of tires from the majors in one month, $15,000 in batteries and $9,000 in antifreeze. If they can't buy in such quantities, this official says, they are faced with two equally painful alternatives: they won't be guaranteed gasoline "in quantity"—or they will have to pay double for their leases in 1981-82. Which way would you prefer to die?

A Miami dealer tells of his experience: "Exxon wants to take over all the independents in this area. The real intent is to install a *salaried* manager, never paying him more than $20,000 annually, and to control 100 percent of everything, to share nothing. In my case, the new lease they offered looks O.K. because it's for six years. But look at the terms: $800 a month in 1980, $1,350 a month in 1981, $1,450 in 1982 and $1,690 for 1983 and thereafter. I can't handle that. I'm getting out—and that is what Exxon wants."

Another way of applying pressure is to set a quota for the number of gallons a station must pump a month if it is to continue to get deliveries of gasoline. It used to be, Jerry Ferrara says, that the majors didn't consider a station worthwhile unless it pumped at least 40,000 gallons a month; now they have raised the figure to 75,000 gallons. In many cases, if an independent can't sell those 75,000 gallons, he is cut off.

What happens when an independent dealer is driven out of business? The oil company then has several choices. If it has a company-managed station in the vicinity, it may just abandon the independent one, counting on picking up extra business at its adjacent location. Or, if it decides to keep the

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Fred J. Cook, a regular contributor to The Nation, *won the Newspaper Guild of New York's 1980 "Page One" Award for Crusading Journalism for his series of articles on energy issues. Research support for this article was provided by the Fund for Investigative Journalism in Washington, D.C.*

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former independent's station running, it installs a $20,000-a-year manager and keeps all the profits on everything—gas, oil, tires, repairs, servicing. But in many areas, as along Route 3 in New Jersey, the drive is on to cut salaries and overhead by selling gas only. And the final step in this progression is to establish more self-service stations at which the sales on the pump register in the office, and all the major needs is a cashier to make change or record the credit card sale.

According to Ferrara, Amoco is the leader in the drive for completely self-service stations. This opens up wider opportunities for selling maximum quantities of gasoline with a minimum number of employees. The computer is an invaluable tool in the never-ceasing effort to maximize profits. One major company, Ferrara says, has a computerized setup that can control the pump prices at all its stations from a single central console. Just press a button on the computer and the price of gasoline at a given station automatically changes. If there are several stations located fairly close together and offering competition, the computer can vary the price from daytime to nighttime. "The price may be kept low during the day," Ferrara explains. "Then comes night and some of the competing stations close. One punch on the key in the headquarters computer then raises the price at the station that has no nighttime competition."

This latest grab by Big Oil for full control of the gasoline distribution system has touched off a counterattack in the state legislatures. In Florida, a bill was introduced that would have freed dealers from the requirement that they buy only from their major suppliers, whether it be Exxon, Gulf, Mobil or others of the big brotherhood. If the major refused to supply a dealer with gasoline, the bill would have permitted him to buy from any other source available. The legislation would also have made it illegal for the major company to compel a dealer to sell only its tires, batteries and accessories.

This bill expired in the end-of-the-session legislative traffic jam, and Florida's Allied Gasoline Retailers Association sent a memorandum to members of the legislature urging that the "Retail Dealer Fair Marketing Act" be passed at the next session. In their memorandum the dealers charged:

> Most of the large refiners have a five-year plan that encompasses the following philosophy: fewer and fewer outlets with larger gasoline volumes, hopefully owned and *operated* by the refiner company. . . . This can and will be accomplished by placing the small independent businessman, who presently leases his facilities, up against the wall financially. Doubling his rent and temporarily selling gasoline through their own controlled outlets at prices that are lower than they charge the dealer are just two of the methods now being employed.

The outcry from gasoline dealers around the nation became so loud that it was heard even in Congress. Representative Claude Pepper of Florida introduced a bill providing: "Effective one year after date of enactment, major refiners will be prohibited from directly operating any retail gasoline outlets." It would also require that the proprietor of any leased station taken over and offered for sale must be given the first opportunity to buy, and it would free dealers from the provision that they must sell only their landlord's brand-named accessories.

In the Senate, Senator Howard Metzenbaum of Ohio sponsored comparable legislation. Metzenbaum, who headed an antitrust subcommittee in the 96th Congress, listened to the complaints of dealers at public hearings. The American Petroleum Institute denied that there was any attempt by the majors to eliminate the independent dealers. Senator Metzenbaum reacted with incredulity. "If there's no problem, then why are all these people here?" he asked.

And there, at the moment, the issue rests. Will the new "free enterprise" Reagan Administration be moved by the plight of the independent gas dealer? Will it react with horror to Big Oil's latest monopolistic power play? Don't bet on it. □

Afghanistan Now

FRED HALLIDAY

Kabul

In Kabul, the official view of the war is clear enough: "Counterrevolution," aided by Pakistan, China, the conservative Arab states and the West, is gradually being defeated. The towns are more or less secure. The countryside is returning to normal. Groups of "bandits" and "looters" are still at large, burning schools and destroying hospitals, but they no longer present the danger they did six months ago. The ruling party, the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, is more popular than ever, and it is gradually overcoming the divisions that rent it in the two years after the 1978 revolution.

The role of the Soviet contingents in all of this is to "protect" the existing regime, not to occupy or pacify the entire country. The official Soviet figure for its forces is 45,000 (around half that given by Western sources). Its losses have been, it is said, 300 to 400 killed and seriously wounded, many times lower than most Western estimates. The Soviet forces, one is told, will leave once the counterrevolution assisted from abroad is over.

In the end the solution for Afghanistan will be a political one, officials here say. Internally, this means broadening the base of the regime to include non-Communist elements; already a lenient policy toward those who formerly opposed it is being pursued. Little stress is laid on the socialist aims of the Government, and some tribal chiefs whose holdings were expropriated during the land reform are even being given back their property. Internationally, the solution involves an agreement with Pakistan and Iran, who must cease allowing support for the rebels to cross their frontiers. The withdrawal of the "limited contingent" of Soviet forces, as it is known, is predicated upon a parallel ending of

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iterference from abroad in support of the rebels.

Government officials concede no legitimacy whatsoever) the rebels. They are seen indiscriminately as landlords nd tribal chiefs keen to preserve their privileges or as rigands and tribal raiders who are continuing their tradiional way of life and taking advantage of the chaos in the ountry to increase their level of graft. They are using Islam s a means of confusing the rural population and are mbezzling the aid, financial and material, which they eceive from the West, in order to line their own pockets.

So much, then, for the official picture. How much truth is iere in it?

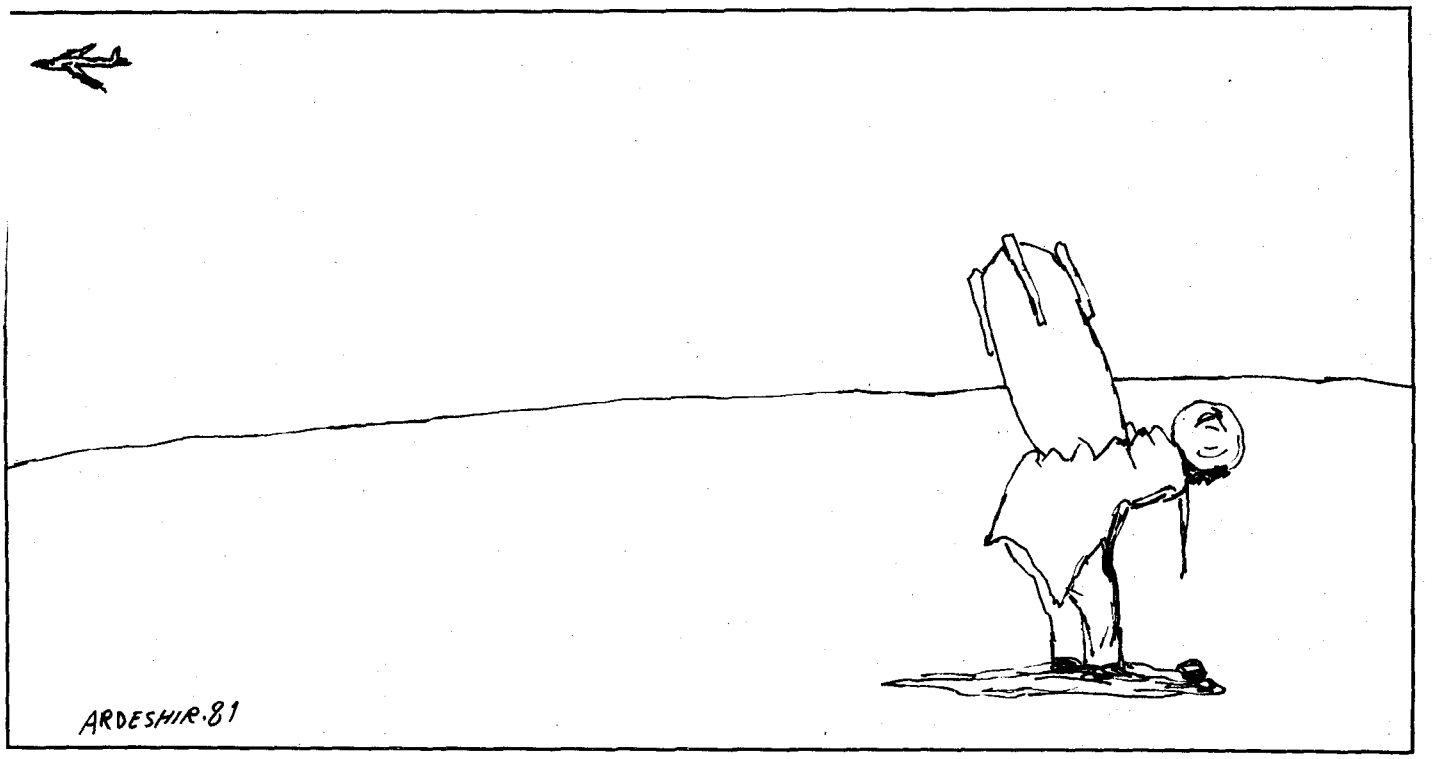
The military balance inside Afghanistan has shifted conderably in favor of the Kabul Government and the Rusians over the past few months. While occasional acts of abotage and nighttime shooting occur, the main cities are ecure and surrounded by cordons of troops. I spent five ights in Kabul and two in the northwestern city of Herat, nd during all that time I saw and heard no evidence of rebel ction. A report broadcast on the BBC while I was there tellng of a substantial mutiny at the Pul-i Sharqi garrison just utside Kabul was proved false by firsthand inspection.

It is hard to form a general picture of the situation in the countryside because of the fragmented nature of the terrain, ut the consensus of Soviet observers—and some Western ources agree—is that the rebels have to some extent been orced on the defensive. They now have to operate in much maller groups than before, and lacking modern equipment, hey cannot resist Soviet ground and helicopter offensives. They are also receiving far fewer arms from sympathetic sources inside the Afghan Army than in the past.

The rebels are divided by many factors: political allegiance, tribal sympathies and hatreds, ethnic differences, the terrain. One reason among several why Afghanistan cannot become the Soviet Vietnam is that the rebels lack the organizational structure and stamina of the National Liberation Front. Undoubtedly, many of their leaders are financial speculators or local robbers, and they haven't even the pretense of a social program. They are simply destroying everything that smacks of Government interference. In the province of Herat, for example, more than 100 schools have been burned down by rebel forces, and Western sources indicate that up to half of all the medical and educational facilities in the countryside have been destroyed by insurgents this year. Many have openly proclaimed their opposition to reforms in the status of women, and a number of women who married under the new marriage decrees have been shot by the rebels.

On the other hand, the military situation is by no means as rosy as Kabul officials claim. The Afghan Army itself remains a weak instrument for Government policy and most of its conscripts lack any strong motivation for supporting the Government. They tend to fire into the air when told to attack rebels, and so are restricted to garrison duties in the cities. The Afghans with the highest morale are party recruits. Some of them—about 30,000 by official estimates—have been drafted into the armed forces and fight alongside Soviet troops. The other effective fighting forces are the militias who hold control over the areas where they live—mainly in the Pushtun provinces of Khost and Pakhtia to the southeast.

Although the Afghan forces can penetrate where they want in the rural areas, and have secured some regions, the overall rural situation remains extremely insecure, and rebel groups can strike almost anywhere at will. While the main roads are either well secured or at least passable in convoy, most of the villages remain beyond the control of the Government, and rebels can enter them for mili-



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tary or political activities at night, if not by day.

The Government's political situation is also rather less secure than it is made out to be. The feuding continues between the Khalq faction, in power in 1978 and 1979, and the Parcham faction, led by Babrak Karmal, in power since the Soviet intervention. The Parchamis blame the Khalqis for forcing their reforms down the throats of the people and for fanning the flames of tribal rebellion by their brutal policies. They insist that they will never be able to gain the loyalty of the people as long as the Khalqis remain in the Government.

The Russians have tried to keep the two factions from warring too much, but in doing so they have incurred the wrath of both sides. The Khalqis remain to a considerable degree unrepentant for past failures, and blame the Russians for going soft on the social reforms that, in the Khalqis' view, are needed to consolidate the revolutionary regime. Since the Khalqis retain an important influence within the politicized officer corps and at least some sympathy within the civilian party membership, it is unlikely that this problem will be resolved in the near future.

The question of foreign involvement in the rebel movement is difficult to gauge, and Afghan Government sources exaggerate its effectiveness. There are plenty of internal sources of the opposition to the Government—resistance to any change in primitive rural areas, hostility toward specific governmental actions by adversely affected vested interests, the prospect of profit and loot, the anger over the brutalities of former Prime Minister Hafizullah Amin, the resentment of foreign troops. These factors have given the resistance a certain popular appeal in the villages, however conservative this appeal may be. But they would not have taken the dimension they did were it not for the substantial assistance that has been provided by outside forces. The official view therefore has some validity.

Pakistan holds the key to a solution of the Afghan crisis. While protesting its noninvolvement, it is providing that most valuable of assets, an open frontier, as well as arms, training and nonmilitary supplies to the rebels and their refugee followers. Some arms and financial assistance are also coming from China, the Arab states, Egypt and the West. I saw a pile of 88-millimeter heat-seeking anti-tank rockets, clearly marked with the insignia of the U.S. Army, which the Government had captured from the rebels, along with piles of nondetectable U.S. anti-tank mines and caches of Chinese, West German and British rifles and machine guns. Reports from Pakistan indicate that much of the humanitarian aid is being pocketed by Pakistani or Afghan rebel officials, but the overall flow of assistance plus the general political commitment are an important source of support for the rebels.

So far the Russians and Afghans have been cautious in their relations with Pakistan. There have been far fewer hot-pursuit raids across the border than might have been expected, and the Afghan officials responsible for relations with the Pakistani opposition have held in check those elements from Baluchistan and the North-West Front Province who would like a more militant line again General Zia. Most of the Afghan attention has, so far, be focused on such moderate political forces as the People Party of the late Ali Bhutto and the National Democrat Party of Wali Khan.

The Babrak Karmal Government is confident that wi time the presence of one million armed and lawless Afgh refugees will provoke some backlash among Pakistanis, a there are already signs of anxiety over the pressure on gra ing areas in the mountains and the increase in urban crin associated with the Afghan influx.

If Pakistan does not alter its policy, two lines of acti could be pursued. One would be to step up support f the Pakistani opposition, and firmly to remind General Z of what Kabul could unleash against his hated regime. Tl other would be to offer a tough deal, whereby Kabul wou agree to recognize the disputed border between the tw countries in return for a Pakistani commitment to enfor security along its own frontier. The problem with the first that it might give the West and China an excuse to increa their involvement in Pakistan. The problem with the secon is that while so far the Afghan authorities have deliberate played down the matter of the disputed frontier, they a pear totally unwilling to consider such a realistic settlemen Officials whom I queried on the likelihood of such a de reacted against it with apparently deeply felt nationalistic i dignation.

The cost to the Russians of their involvement in Afgha istan must be considerable—in men killed and woun ed, in economic aid to the Afghan Government and i the deterioration in the international climate which th has brought about. Yet nothing I learned, from discussion with both Afghan and Russian officials, led me to think tha there was any likelihood of a reversal of policy. The Ru sians did not seek the accession to power of a pro-Sovi Government in Kabul, and when it did come to power i April 1978, they did not look for ways of sending troops t Afghanistan. Only when the situation inside Afghanista had deteriorated so far that they risked losing all to a trium phant tribal rebellion did they send in their forces. But hav ing made the decision to send troops, and having though long and hard about that decision, they are very unlikel now to leave without having first insured the security of th Kabul Government.

The West's response has, if anything, made a solution les likely. The international measures appear in retrospect to b transient: the Olympics boycott has been and gone, an despite the trade embargo the Russians have imported twic as much wheat in 1980 as they did in 1979. Whereas muc American propaganda continues to harp on alleged short falls in Soviet energy supplies, the issue that is causing rea alarm in the chancelleries of the West this month is the pros pect of the Soviet Union becoming a major supplier of natural gas to Western Europe in the late 1980s. The Afghanistan crisis has therefore done little to block Soviet commerce.

Western aid to the rebels—far less than the Russians

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lege, but far more than the complaining rebel leaders retend—offers no prospect of victory. Rather, it merely rolongs a hopeless war in which Western states use the fghan rebels to embarrass the Russians internationally. If ıe Reagan Administration were to step up aid to the ebels dramatically, this would not reverse the balance of orces in Afghanistan so much as further postpone the day hen a settlement could be reached. And officials in Europe e worried by such a prospect for another reason: they ılculate the effects of a Western commitment to the fghan rebels in terms of what this would do for the West's anding in Pakistan and Iran. To aid the Afghan rebels and e seen to win would be a great victory. But to aid them and e seen to lose would give greater emphasis to the West's eaknesses than would acceptance of Soviet predominance ı a country the West had already conceded to it back ı the late 1950s. The strategic prize of the 1980s is not fghanistan but Iran, and it is partly in terms of the effects n that now chronically tumultuous country that policy oward Afghanistan is being formulated.

Western policy toward Afghanistan since the Soviet intervention would therefore appear to have involved low-level ıaterial aid, but it has been coupled with a massive propaanda barrage designed to derive maximum political benefit rom the situation. This has taken the form of organizing otes in the United Nations to denounce Russia, drumming p support from the assorted monarchs and despots of the Ioslem world and increasing the broadcasts to Afghanistan f the BBC and Voice of America. It has also involved a ystematic disinformation campaign, designed to circulate s many half-truths and alarmist rumors about Afghanistan s possible, through the cooperative typewriters of the Western press corps.

Afghanistan has therefore been a useful instrument with vhich to beat the Russians, and the longer the Soviet troops tay there the better. Yet a solution that envisions a Soviet roop withdrawal, an end to foreign support for the rebels ınd the formation of a broader-based Government in Kabul hat would include both Babrak Karmal and some rebel lements is feasible. Such a prospect is still a distant one, but t remains the only remotely realistic way to solve the present Afghan situation. □

McCarthyism

(Continued From Front Cover)

himself must lead this campaign by making repeated speeches on "the reality of subversion and . . . the un-American nature of much so-called 'dissidence.' "

With increased public awareness, the authors say, it will be easier to revise current Justice Department guidelines to allow surveillance of law-abiding protest groups which may someday develop a violent faction. Legislation barring warrantless wiretapping of Americans can be repealed. The intelligence agencies can be exempted from the Freedom of Information and Privacy Acts.

Free at last of these restraints, the Federal Bureau of Investigation will be able once again to undertake broad investigations of domestic political groups, using "such standard intelligence techniques as wiretapping, mail covers, informants and (at least occasionally) illegal entries." Local and state police, and even private corporations, are to be enlisted in this effort.

These investigations will target not only terrorist or violent organizations of the right and the left but also groups engaged in lawful activity. In case the new Administration is unable to identify its enemies among these groups, the Heritage Foundation provides a list—a long one. Its targets include foreign immigrants, "radical and New Left groups" such as the Campaign for Economic Democracy and the Institute for Policy Studies, and even "anti-defense and anti-nuclear lobbies." The Government should also target "clergymen, students, businessmen, entertainers, labor officials, journalists and government workers [who] may engage in subversive activities without being fully aware of the extent, purposes, or control of their activities." Not just liberals, in other words, but their dupes as well.

Actually, the proposed surveillance scheme would affect only persons who have done nothing illegal or improper. To the extent that internal-security investigations focus on groups involved in violent activity or with secret ties to foreign powers, they merely duplicate law-enforcement and counterintelligence functions. The only subject unique to the internal-security field is lawful domestic political activity. This was reflected in recent interviews with authors of the Heritage report, who had difficulty defining internal security apart from law-enforcement or counterintelligence concerns. There are few restrictions on these latter types of investigations.

The report's sense of alarm also extends to the C.I.A. and other foreign intelligence agencies, which "have not been so weak since Pearl Harbor." This weakness should be remedied by increased funding for covert action and intelligence collection. Centralized counterintelligence files should be established and made available to the F.B.I. and the C.I.A., the report urges. Traditional notions of political privacy must be revised: counterintelligence officers should be permitted to investigate any American without restriction, although "stern penalties" should be imposed for misusing the resulting information.

The report also proposes an extensive reorganization of the intelligence community, including more systematic review of collection and analysis for evidence of deception by foreign governments. The report calls for the C.I.A. to be split into two agencies, one for undercover work and covert action, the other for analysis. There should be increased competition in intelligence analysis between the C.I.A. and the Defense Intelligence Agency. Finally, all the intelligence agencies would be under the control of a Presidential intelligence adviser in the White House.

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Some of these proposals are perfectly sensible. Others are simply the latest maneuvers in a long-running bureaucratic war between the C.I.A. and its more hard-line critics—including Reagan's National Security Adviser Richard Allen—who mistrust the Agency's "liberal bias," feel that it has underestimated the recent build-up of Soviet strategic strength and want to give the Department of Defense more authority in intelligence matters. Some C.I.A. loyalists on the transition team object that putting the White House in charge of intelligence would subject the Agency's analyses to political interference. They also note that reorganization will not necessarily produce more objective intelligence. As one former official commented, "You can take the best estimator in the world and put him in a blue suit, and his analysis is going to reflect blue-suit concerns."

How influential will the Heritage report be? When the report was presented to the transition team recently, transition director Edwin Meese 3d attempted to distance himself from it, saying only that the report had no official status and that "we're paying attention to a lot of different reports." Heritage president Edwin Feulner also noted that the report was not commissioned by Reagan but said that he expected it to be well received.

Neither man mentioned that Meese had for the past year "been working behind the scenes with Heritage Foundation president Ed Feulner on the transition," according to a Heritage Foundation source. Although Heritage "has to maintain a semblance of non-affiliation," as the source put it, several persons with ties to the foundation, including a trustee and a spokesman for Feulner, reported that Meese had worked closely with it to recruit conservative talent for a new administration. Heritage recently sent Meese a set of books containing 1,500 to 2,000 names of potential appointees.

A more specific indication of the significance of the intelligence section of the report is that every one of its major proposals is a restatement of policy papers and legislation produced by Reagan supporters over the last year and a half. The plan to reorganize the intelligence community follows a paper prepared by Richard Allen and released by the Republican National Committee in August 1979. [See Jeff Stein, "Reagan's Plans for Intelligence," *The Nation*, July 12, 1980.] Allen's proposals also surfaced in a Republican intelligence charter, S. 2929, introduced in the Senate last July by Reagan's point man on the Hill, Paul Laxalt, and other Senators. The bill was written by a Senate Intelligence Committee staff member who also served on the intelligence transition team and drafted large parts of the Heritage report.

Although the Allen paper did not discuss domestic affairs, the Republican charter would have explicitly put the C.I.A. in the internal-security business. The bill authorized the Agency to operate in the United States, and pointedly failed to repeat the ban in the National Security Act of 1947 on performing "internal-security functions."

Other Heritage recommendations were embodied in an early version of a Republican F.B.I. charter introduced as a companion to S. 2929. The charter was drafted by Republican staff aides, one of whom also wrote sections of t Heritage report and made recommendations to the i telligence transition team. Another headed the transiti team for the F.B.I. Although narrowed in response to pr criticism, the bill, as originally drafted, required the Bure to investigate a broad range of law-abiding groups unc guidelines that explicitly subordinated legal and consti tional rights to "the security of the American people."

The 1980 Republican Platform announced the pa ty's plans for intensified internal-security a tivities. In a section on terrorism, the platfo pledged that "establishment of a Congressio and Executive capability to oversee our internal-security forts will no longer be neglected." While this would n necessarily reach lawful protest, Reagan's advisers have far not been careful about, or interested in, drawing t distinction.

But it is not clear that the rest of the Government sha the transition team's enthusiasm. The C.I.A. was alm destroyed by exposure of its internal-security operatio F.B.I. officials are also tired of being sued for the Bureau violation of the rights of groups engaging in lawful politi protests. F.B.I. Director William Webster, who is expect to stay on under Reagan, recently said that he thinks t Bureau is operating effectively and that he does not wa any change in current guidelines.

Given the possible reluctance of the C.I.A. and the F.B to pursue law-abiding domestic groups, a crucial forum watch will be the newly formed Senate Subcommittee Security and Terrorism, successor to the defunct Intern Security Committee. The panel, established by incomi Judiciary Committee chairman Strom Thurmond, will headed by the newly elected Senator from Alabama, form Adm. Jeremiah Denton (who is not a lawyer). Denton h not yet decided whether the subcommittee will hold i vestigative hearings or will content itself with oversight a legislation affecting the F.B.I. and the Drug Enforc ment Administration, over which it has jurisdiction. A aide to Senator Orrin Hatch, also on the subcommitte recently commented that investigative hearings are antic pated.

Meanwhile, the Heritage Foundation has found that i report was unexpectedly controversial. Minor changes ha been made in the intelligence section. The report no long calls for the use of illegal entries but instead recommen mere "surreptitious entries." The internal-security sectio of the report may be turned into an appendix.

Not that it matters. The Heritage report was probably in tended less to influence the transition team than as a vehicl for the views of certain Reagan advisers. Some of thos views on ways to improve intelligence analysis are quite us ful. Others seem designed primarily to intimidate. In an case, the Heritage report has the unusual distinction o simultaneously unsettling liberals, the F.B.I. and the C.I.A As a former general counsel to the Agency recently com mented, "My God, it's been terrible working with ou enemies. Now we've got to work with our friends!"

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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

The Ford in Our Past

MARK SHECHNER

AMBITION. *By Joseph Epstein. E.P. Dutton. 300 pp. $12.95.*

It was not so long ago that Jewish intellectuals in America carried on in public like exiled Russians, one minute exhorting the masses to revolt, the next issuing moody notes from the Dostoyevskian underground. In that feverish period, revolution and alienation seemed like two sides of the same romantic coin. Now, in the age of the Super Bowl, Jewish intellectuals come on more like football coaches: downbeat, All-American and avid for victory. There is still that quaver of panic in their exhortations; this is halftime and America is down by many TDs. But in lieu of fiery denunciations of the existing order we now get pep talks. As if to rally our fallen spirits, they write books with decidedly boosterish titles: *Making It*, *Breaking Ranks*, *Two Cheers for Capitalism*, *We Must March My Darlings*, *Free to Choose* and, now, *Ambition*. They belabor us with positive thinking. One is a little astounded at how easy the journey was from Trotskyism to Rockneism. There are even Jewish intellectuals today who will not rest easy with a mere offensive lineman in the White House: they're holding out for a quarterback.

On the evidence of *Ambition*, Joseph Epstein would appear to be one of them. Certainly, had Jack Kemp been this year's Republican nominee for President, *Ambition* could have been passed out at prayer meetings and homecoming rallies across the country as campaign literature. Though Kemp is nowhere present by name, he is there in spirit, hovering above the book's heroes of luck and pluck: Ben Franklin, John D. Rockefeller, Meyer Guggenheim, Henry Ford, E. I. (Eleuthère Irénée) du Pont and Joseph Kennedy. A rags-to-riches kid, who parlayed a simple gift for throwing a football great distances into a professional career and, afterward, a major political one as well, Kemp should be Epstein's kind of American: an example to youth of how opportunities are exploited in a free-market economy.

Why this detour through Jack Kemp when the subject is Joseph Epstein? Because to read Epstein here in Buffalo, where sports is a Jacob's ladder into politics, is to think of Kemp, currently our most notable case in point. Epstein is a sports fan who trusts in the adage that competition builds character (and, as a corollary, that taxation saps the will). He extols those virtues of business that apply equally to the gridiron, and is steeped in the ethic of the old high-scoring American Football League, that the best defense is a good offense.

Ambition is a book about the national character. Unlike its predecessor in celebrating the successful life, Norman Podhoretz's *Making It*, *Ambition* is not an exercise in self-aggrandizement. The side of Epstein's public persona that is inclined to preen itself—which is no small portion of it—appears to have had its say in his collection of *American Scholar* essays, published in 1979 under the title *Familiar Territory*. *Ambition* is a more impersonal book, a rambling dissertation on the passion for self-improvement as the cornerstone of contemporary life and, lest that sound insufficiently ambitious, as the sine qua non of a high civilization. "Whatever its excesses," Epstein assures us, taking the long view of Western civilization, "ambition has at all times been the passion that best releases the energies that make civilization possible." While that word blankets a world of attitudes, Epstein leaves no doubt as to what he means by it: the desire for the world's acclaim and its goods, a coveting of what the world recognizes as success.

That, precisely, is the book's fatal flaw. Epstein manipulates his definitions to wring broader conclusions from his narrow sympathies—to claim, as he does toward the end, that his book is really a praise of the will and the *vita activa*. Yet his overwhelming message is that ambition's only rewards lie up the greasy pole of success. The *vita activa* is fine if you happen to be a captain of industry and, as for the will, so much the better if your employees can exercise it for you. Epstein's brands of ambition and will leave no room for the modest or the private—for pride of craft, for example, or such domestic ambitions as the desire to be a good father. What can he make of something like Malcolm Cowley's recent recollection that as a young man "he had few worldly ambitions; that is, he didn't want to be rich or famous too soon, or occupy a place of influence, or be a leader; he simply wanted to write better than others." Is that not a serious form of ambition, or was the young Cowley just kidding himself, hiding behind his more tasteful desires in order not to admit his antisocial ones? Epstein leaves us in the dark on the subject of ambitions that fall this side of the spectacular; he'll have no truck with liberal platitudes about smaller being better.

Ambition is a little *McGuffey's Reader* for intellectuals, consisting of stirring vignettes from the lives of the great, illuminating quotes from the successful and famous, and cautionary admonitions about the flagging of energy in our time. Spenglerian in its cyclical view of our history, it suggests that we are now on the downward leg of our cycle. *Der Untergang Des Guggenheims*, which Epstein vividly depicts, is something of a metaphor for America itself. America is one vast Faulknerian clan, its vitality running down from one generation to the next, like Mississippi from Sartoris to Snopes. But the book doesn't dwell overlong on the decay of fortunes, for Epstein is more fascinated with their making and with the shaping of America through the accumulation and deployment of capital.

Though his meandering tales of great endeavor frequently seem pointless, the same lessons apply to all. One, that the life of a winner is invariably better, more pleasurable, than that of a loser. (Though Epstein probably knows better, he allows his book to give the impression that anyone who is not a big winner is, ipso facto, a big loser. The *via media*, held dear by such earlier students of success as Daniel Defoe, strikes Epstein as a poor substitute for the big killing.) Two, that the personal ambitions and visions of the Fords, Rockefellers, et al. built and gave shape to America. The captains of industry are the true founding fathers. "Deplorable and self-centered though much of the conduct of the robber-baron genera-

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tion was, ruthless and rueful though many of its leading figures have come to seem, after all that is bad has been said about them, it needs to be said yet again that they built up the country."

In short, we are all in their debt. The grumbling of liberals about their social aberrations, such as Ford's anti-Semitism, or about such side effects of industrial capitalism as inflation, monopoly, the consolidation of power, the boom and bust cycle, the alienation of routine labor, structural unemployment and windfall profits, is not only gross ingratitude but hypocrisy as well. Notwithstanding Ford's vicious campaigns against the Jews (he is mentioned by name in the American edition of *Mein Kampf*) and his terrible record in dealing with labor, Ford earns Epstein's praise as "the Car Humanitarian."

Epstein does concede a few eidolons of ambition who were not robber barons. As an English professor, after all, he must defer in some small measure to writers, and he does have some preferences, though not everyone will share them or his reasons for them. Edith Wharton has his approval for having been born into money and having survived the stifling conditions of life at the top to become the novelist of her class. Wallace Stevens earns a high mark for combining a lifetime's commitment to poetry with a career in insurance without neglecting his obligations to either. Granting the inner strength implied in both examples, we might nonetheless ask why these writers, of all the examples of triumph over adversity our literature has to offer, should be singled out for special praise. If Stevens is a paragon of ambition for combining poetry and insurance, what of William Carlos Williams, the poet-obstetrician of Paterson? The answer would appear to be that Wharton and Stevens are proof positive that the imagination may thrive in an atmosphere dominated by money and business, and that neither the regal salons of Park Avenue nor the bustling offices of the Hartford are, as the liberal imagination would have them, prison houses of the intellect. Williams, only a small-town doctor, would not meet such terms for heroism; he was not ambitious enough to have jeopardized his art with finance and commerce. Moreover, he harbored all kinds of left-wing sentiments which, for Epstein, would be enough to call both his ambition and his poetry into question.

As for F. Scott Fitzgerald, who did come into close quarters with big money, his collapse is an exemplary "failure of success"; that is, a failure of nerve attendant upon an immature attitude toward money. As Epstein asks, in speaking of the actor Richard Dreyfuss and the writer Michael Harrington, both of whom have confessed to having been thrown off balance by early fame and its rewards, "Is their determination—as well as that of others determined to fail at success—anything more than a grim determination not to grow up?" Neoconservative morality is always on the side of growing up.

Alas for America, the grim determination to remain childish has grown into a national pastime, and the qualms of a Michael Harrington are nothing less than symptoms of a general loss of morale. The will to succeed and the social ambitions that feed it are in eclipse, most notably among the educated classes whose position in society may be due to the very values they now affect to despise. "Ambition connotes a certain Rotarian optimism, a thing u seemly, in very poor taste, rather lik raging sexual appetite in someone qu elderly." Epstein proposes seve "unarguable" theses about contemp rary life, the unarguable thesis being the conservative temper what the nc negotiable demand was to the radic "To say of a young man or woman tl he or she is ambitious is no longer, a once was, a clear compliment. Ratl the reverse. A person called ambitiou likely to arouse anxiety, for in our d anyone so called is thought to be thre ening, possibly a trifle neurotic."

For the conservative imagination (t "neo" provides no useful distincti here), this new autumnal mood that h taken hold of us is the very cause of c decline. It suggests "a people that h lost its way, its energy, its dreams—in word, its ambition." Epstein, citi Durkheim's observation that success the very basis of our social life, tells that with the decline of success h come an unraveling of the social fabr America is fading in the stretch, as ascendant classes succumb to ennui a to the feeling that "the world is pre well used up."

Anyone who is acquainted with t neoconservative literature of crisis w recognize these sentiments at onc They are as familiar as Milton Frie man's and Ben Wattenberg's faces public television (made possible, course, by grants from Mobil Oi America has been swallowed up California—not the California of Ro ald Reagan and aerospace but the Ca ifornia of Jerry Brown and inner spac of boutiques and plant shoppes, roll skates, marijuana farms, health food hot tubs, zero population growth, s surrogates and nonsmoking areas every encounter group. Boutiq America, as Epstein calls it in one of h cavalier *American Scholar* essays, h opted out of geopolitics for the nirvan pools of vacant narcissism.

Epstein's version of the America failure of nerve is becoming to an i tellectual who is steeped in the Gre Books, cherishes the written word an takes political guidance from Lion Trilling. Accordingly, we've come t this sorry pass because *the America novel has sabotaged the American wil*

The Nation Family

Editor's note: *In listing "Some Books From* The Nation *Family" in the December 6, 1980, issue we predicted that a few loyal members would be overlooked. And so, alas, they were, among them:*

ANN BANKS. *First Person America.* Alfred A. Knopf. 287 pp. $13.95.

RICHARD ELMAN. *Cocktails at Somoza's and Other Stories.* Apple-wood Press. 160 pp. $10.95. (May 1981.)

TODD GITLIN. *The Whole World Is Watching: The Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left.* University of California Press. 327 pp. $12.95.

KURT VONNEGUT (with Ivan Chermayeff). *Sun Moon Star.* Harper & Row. 64 pp. $15.

Palm Sunday. Delacorte Press. 320 pp. $12.95. (March 1981.)

COMING
RING LARDNER JR.
ON HOLLYWOOD

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lthough they are not often spoken of is, novels are among the world's atest instruments of personal educa- n. People, and especially the young, e from novels a great many things, t all of them what the novelists mselves may have originally intend- . . . It would be naïve to assume it many of the notions that Amer- ns hold about ambition do not orig- ite in the novels they have read."

This is not an announcement that fic- n in the modern era has been iformly hostile to big money but a im that the novel has succeeded utter- in reforming the American heart, taching Americans from the moral uivalents of the gold standard. The vel, of all things, turns out to be the *ns et origo* of our failure of nerve; it s so succeeded in putting its message ross that it has captured the middle ss, whose social tastes and political bits are now pre-eminently "adver- y culture" phenomena. "Antisuccess s been perhaps the strongest strain in nerican literature of the past half- ntury. And to be against success is to t ambition itself in grave doubt."

Since our affliction is patently a ilure of nerve, and since, as everyone ows, the native hue of resolution is klied o'er with the pale cast of liberal ought, it must be the liberal-modern- complex in our culture that is sap- ng our will. Our strategic weaknesses e *au fond* cultural failings, since every each in our geopolitical armor is real- a hairline fracture in the American ll writ large. Come Election Day, not ly is the nerve gap as predictable as e missile or preparedness gap, it is e very same thing.

This business of demanding affirm- ive action from our novelists is strictly mug's game. It combines the vanity of e professor, who happily discovers in s special field the very fulcrum of the ilture, with the zeal of the moral cru- der, who takes literature to be the ne of our affliction. The literary cru- der, who cares nothing for the imag- ation and is indifferent to questions of aft or form, asks only that art be alutary, positive and morally bracing. pstein's version of this Sunday service ispenses with the bleakly spiritual side f sanctity in favor of supplications ward the local chamber of commerce. nce business is back on its feet and has e moral sanction of the imagination, e spirit will fend nicely for itself.

Literature has always been a whip- ping boy for salesmen of the apoca- lypse, most especially when they have been English professors or literary radicals who have seen the light. From Irving Babbitt's fulminations against Romanticism to Epstein's, Podhoretz's and Hilton Kramer's campaigns against the counterculture of the 1960s, the business of taking literature to be the enemy of the common man or the life drive or Yankee pluck has been virtually an industry. Indeed, were *Ambition* handed to us without a title page we would be justified in mistaking it for a typical product of the 1940s, when American writers were coming off their binge of leftism and taking the pledge of literary nationalism by the wagonload. Best remembered now are Archibald MacLeish's attack on the "irresponsibles," those writers who did not leap to the defense of Western values against fascist ideology, and Van Wyck Brooks's attack on modernist writing as "coterie literature," doomed to triviality by its antipathy to the "life drive." And once Brooks and MacLeish gave the signal, others quickly joined the pack, including Bernard De Voto, who complained of fiction's neglect of the common life, and J. Donald Adams, who launched weekly raids upon negativism and "the existentialist flub-dub" from his command post at *The New York Times Book Review*.

The critic whose arguments most closely resemble Epstein's, however, is John Chamberlain, who wrote for the Luce publications after World War II and did a piece for *Fortune* in 1948 that made a considerable stink: "The Businessman in Fiction." If one were to believe current fiction, he wrote, the businessman "belonged to a species of indigenous American monster that specialized in subverting the press, bribing the government, shooting it out with labor, and packing the colleges with spineless professors who kowtowed to the monster's least responsible whims." Business deserved a new deal of its own: it was time America's novelists spoke up for its ingenuity, its dynamism, its genius for sharing the wealth. Underlying such enthusiasm was the definitive blend of post-Depression optimism and post-Marxist guilt that gave the literary life of the 1940s its distinctive manic-depressive moodiness. In addition, there was the spirit of the "managerial revolution," which had replaced the Rasputins of capitalism with modest executives, who were reputed to be earnest, self-effacing (even faceless) guys who lived on your block and played on your team. The Henry Fords, John D. Rockefellers, Irving Thalbergs and Jay Goulds now belonged to the folklore of capitalism, not the actuality of business.

History will record that for all the hectic campaigning by Brooks, MacLeish, Chamberlain and the volunteers who enlisted in their brigade, fiction was not reformed. Except for John Dos Passos, whose later novels were monotonous efforts to undo the harm he had done in his radical youth, novelists who had had their fill of rebellion in the 1930s did not rush to take communion on Wall Street later on. They drew strength, rather, from the power of negative thinking, showing a decided preference for alienation over boosterism. These efforts to inject a note of celebration into our writing, then, could be virtually dismissed were they not omens of the crusade for political conformity that descended upon Hollywood in the 1950s; there the studio system and heavy capital investment made artists especially vulnerable to the whims and fears of moguls who had not yet retired to the Museum of Business History.

Joseph Epstein's *Ambition* is not nearly so ominous. *Kulturbolshewis-*

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PANTHEON

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mus, as Dwight Macdonald called it in the 1940s, is not around the corner this time, except in such a wholly controlled medium as television. But contrary to Macdonald's fears about the fate of culture under constant mobilization for war, we've apparently learned to cope with the cold war without, to paraphrase a line from Mort Sahl, imprisoning an American every time the Soviet Union imprisons a Russian. That Epstein's tastes, however, do not augur an official standard that will soon bear down upon us does not make them any more palatable.

Epstein has correctly noted—how could he not?—that our literature, notwithstanding its own status as a big business, is a holdout against the values of commercial civilization, and he has determined that the stronghold must be taken. He does not value the pressure that the imagination of life places upon the day-to-day practice of it, or cherish literature as a lonely and rather feeble point of opposition to the idols of the marketplace; instead, he champions the commercial life against the imaginative on the transparently specious ground that some "adversary culture" of literary parentage has won out over the money culture, and that the latter is now desperately in need of revival, being the very root of our national vitality. Literature has shorn our Samson's locks.

That is the silliest and most dangerous part of Epstein's book, the pretense that the commercial foundations of our society have been undermined by currents of radical chic, as though the chambers of commerce everywhere were occupied by hippies and English majors, bent on greening America at any cost. Unless this world looks a good deal different from Evanston than it does from Buffalo, I fail to see how anyone can blame this winter of our discontent on the alienated views of literary modernism. The prevailing *fleurs du mal* in this town are inflation and unemployment.

Yet the illusion that he is holding a tiny beachhead against withering fire has to be defended, lest it dawn on Epstein that his bold counteroffensive may be no more than a mopping-up operation. The pose of embattlement, which is vital to the mythos of neoconservatism, serves nicely to mask the self-congratulation of the top dog. More self-assured conservatives, who didn't arrive at the metaphysics of self-interest by tortuous paths from the City University of New York or its equivalents (for Epstein it seems to have been the anti-poverty program in Arkansas), have no need for the excesses of the adversary- or counter-cultures to justify their principles, which would be quite the same no matter what barbarities were in vogue in Berkeley or at *The New York Review of Books.*

What a dreary spectacle! Here is Jewish intellectual of our day, the ed of the *American Scholar*, at last fre his own tormented past and so secur his adjustment to his little room at top that his *tout pardonner* no lor needs even so meager a rationale as *comprendre.* Even Henry Ford is given his trespasses. Now the worl our fathers boasts a car humanist.

'Entering a Different Country'

JOHN TAYLOR

"WATCH OUT FOR THE FOREIGN GUESTS!" China Encounters the West. *By Orville Schell. Pantheon Books. 178 pp. $8.95.*

More than 2,000 years ago the Taoist sage, Lao-tse, professed sentiments that were to have lasting influence on Chinese attitudes and behavior: "Let people . . . be contented with their food, pleased with their clothing, satisfied with their houses, and happy with their customs. Though there be a neighboring country in sight, and the people hear each other's cocks crowing and dogs barking, they would grow old and die without having anything to do with each other." This outlook on life, which was to be realized by the "limitation of wants and the cultivation of contentment," became as distinctively Chinese as the impulse to move on remains American.

Orville Schell ignores the Taoist injunction to stay home, the better to practice an intensely personal brand of journalism. His thoughtful, yet entertaining travel journal, *In the People's Republic*, which came out four years ago, records his first trip to China. He has since returned to China twice and "*Watch Out for the Foreign Guests!*" continues the account of his travels. It also confirms the impression created by the earlier book that as an American observer of the Chinese scene writing in a personal vein, Schell ranks with the late Graham Peck, whose *Two Kinds of Time* established the genre in 1950.

When Schell and his traveling workgroup reached China in early 1975, Chairman Mao was alive, if no longer well, and his apparent political heirs, the Gang of Four, held power. At t time "almost every erg of Chi energy still seemed dedicated to era bourgeois and foreign influenc When the visitors offered to tell s factory workers about daily life America, their hosts could scarcely c ceal their near-total lack of curio Since foreign peoples and their cust had no place in the Chinese scheme things, the subject was simply not of terest.

A mere three years later, on his ond trip to China, Schell felt he "entering a different country," and the time he returned in 1979 the pac change had accelerated beyond a thing he could have thought poss even a few months earlier. The cra Deng Xiaoping had taken over, and efforts to "modernize" China are n subjecting the Chinese to a heavy d of foreign influence, especially fr America. This abrupt and radical re sal has Schell worried. What may b stake, he speculates, is "the integrity China's national identity."

Few Chinese leaders had ever d more to dramatize that identity than late Chairman. Unlike many of comrades, he had no use for anyth Western, and even though the forr trappings of his ideology were i ported, he made of them someth distinctly Chinese. His prescription China was simple: China would rem Chinese and yet become a modern tion, not by borrowing foreign cap and technology but by relying on the nate creativity of the peasant mass Mao was deeply persuaded that if t Chinese were to make it at all, th would have to get there on their ow Schell, who admired Mao's fidelity his vision of Chinese potentialities, calls that "even though, in many wa being in China under Mao and the Ga of Four was suffocating, I could s sense the reasons which seem to ha

John Taylor is a freelance writer who lives in New York.

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ivated Mao's attempt to cast a pro-
ive membrane around his people."
w, "with Mao gone, there was no
er single man or even a corpus of
ught which could provide China
1 its previous singularity of direc-
."

hese quotations should not be con-
ed as evidence that Schell is just
ther bereft Maoist plunged in vain
talgia. In fact he welcomes the com-
ative openness that now prevails in
na, as well he might, since the new
ensation provides him with fresh
y, just when having to go on writing
ut the Gang of Four was becoming
re than a little tedious. Nevertheless,
st Western sinologues continue to
e as earnestly as Mao ever did that
Chinese, in their renewed zeal to
dernize, will somehow manage to
ior their unique heritage.

chell believes that the experience of
lier generations with the same proc-
that Deng has once again set in mo-
1 ought to be a matter of urgent in-
st. Somewhat to his indignation, it is
. The Chinese he has talked with are
dless of the past and behave as if
y had lost their collective memory.
iat in particular do they want from
West and how will they adapt it to
inese circumstances so as to minimize
desirable side effects? Schell could
d no one, even among high officials,
o was willing to discuss these ques-
ns. For the time being, at least, the
inese are content to borrow from
West at random, without giving
ught, so it appears, to the possible
nsequences. Schell concedes that
re may be wisdom in forgetfulness
d the refusal to worry about things
ing wrong. But even if there is he
ll wonders how the Chinese of all peo-
could have become quite so de-
hed from their history.

When Confucian China first attempt-
to modernize during the final dec-
es of the nineteenth century, the
formers who promoted the effort har-
red the innocent view that technology
extrinsic to culture, and that therefore
can be transferred from originator to
porter without risk of provoking cul-
ral disturbance. Thus they proposed
perform a grafting operation: those
ements of Western technology judged
otentially beneficial would be made to
ld a measure of material strength to an
herited Chinese culture that would in
l essential respects remain unchanged.
Schell's graphic phrase, these well-intentioned modernizers were confident that Western technology could be treated as if it were "an obedient team of borrowed horses."

Over the past century we have all learned the hard way that smearing technology around can lead to trouble. Just ask your neighborhood mullah. The Chinese for their part soon discovered that they could do little or nothing with an imported technology they did not understand and that their only means to understanding was Western education. Accordingly, during the 1920s, Republican China exported students by the boatload to foreign universities. When at length they returned, no more than half-Westernized yet no longer quite Chinese, they tended to segregate themselves in the seaboard cities, having found that the peasant China they had left behind had come to seem depressingly alien. It remained for Mao Zedong to mobilize an aggrieved and xenophobic peasantry for a revolution in which few of the would-be modernizers home from Western universities were to have a share.

Schell is wise to refrain from predicting the outcome of modernization since he can tell us nothing about current conditions in rural China. It is the peasants, after all, who will ultimately determine Deng's success or failure. Urban youth is already enthusiastic to the point of infatuation, which is something of a surprise considering that the rigors of Maoism governed their lives only the day before yesterday. Yet curiosity about the West among city slickers is not without precedent. But what will happen in the countryside, where the great majority of the population live, if modernization, as seems likely, is seen to increase the privileges of the already privileged? What reason is there to suppose that the peasants have been prepared for the current influx of foreign influence or the spectacle on the tube of their very own Vice Premier living it up at a Texas barbecue?

These are questions Schell makes no attempt to answer, presumably because he was not permitted to journey beyond the cities, though he never does bother to describe the restrictions imposed on his travels. But even if he could have told us more, he would still have had to reckon with that durable Chinese adage which ought to deter more effectively than it has devotees of the crystal ball: Prophecy is very difficult, especially with respect to the future. □

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'Hey, Hey, the White Swan'

ALICE K. TURNER

NUNS AND SOLDIERS. *By Iris Murdoch. The Viking Press. 505 pp. $14.95.*

Faithful readers of the novels Iris Murdoch turns out so dependably each year will be pleased with the new one, for *Nuns and Soldiers* is typical of the genre over which Murdoch reigns. This is, to take a phrase from several of her books and for want of a better one, the genre of the *coup de foudre*. In these ironic accounts of English manners, no character falls in love gracefully, rationally or even advantageously; in Murdochland, innocent people are poleaxed by inappropriate passions. They are spellbound by people of the wrong sex, the wrong age, the wrong class, the wrong beliefs, the wrong degree of relationship, even the wrong state of corporeal being, as when they fall for God or some other supernatural manifestation. Entranced and writhing, they act out their supercharged emotions in peculiar, mythic, sometimes sinister, ways till the author kills them or lets them off the hook.

Either you like this sort of thing or you don't. If you do, you're in luck, for not only is Murdoch a prolific author (this is her twentieth novel) but other good writers are sometimes lured into the enchanted labyrinths of Murdochland. John Fowles's *The Magus* is pure Murdoch, and his earlier novel, *The Collector* (wickedly sent up by Murdoch herself in *The Sea, the Sea*), is simplified, or proto-Murdoch: the entire plot of that book would be (indeed has been, in *Henry and Cato*) only a thread in the intricate tangle of a Murdoch fabulation. Richard Adams's only non-animal tale, *The Girl in a Swing*, is a Murdoch novel, a little sentimentaliz So far as I know, no American writ have ventured this way: an Oxbridge ucation seems essential to a certain dc nish zest for murder, incest, adulte infanticide, castration, suicide, treac ery—frequent Murdoch subjects.

This whimsical approach to mayh is shared by another British genre, tl of the detective novel, and to compa Murdoch to Agatha Christie is not tirely farfetched. Aside from th regular output with its reliable conte these two regional rulers share a kind inspirational coziness. You know j what you're getting into with a conc tion by Christie or Murdoch; you c curl up in snug anticipation of the wo and, when both writers are form, of a few chuckles too. How ma modern writers are so trustworthy?

Christie was an ingenious, but simp and straightforward, storyteller. Mu doch is ingenious too, but far more i tellectual and devious, and, back in t days of her earlier novels when she w still considered a chic writer, she w thought to have some depth. She c tainly maintains an illusion of dept for example, the first five pages of *Nu and Soldiers* drop the names Schopenhauer, Mauthner, Karl Krau Nietzsche, Homer, Pindar, Mozar Aristotle, Cicero and Wittgenstein—tl last being a perennial Murdoch favorit and no wonder, for he maintained th nothing empirical is knowable, a pos tion consistent with all of Murdoc and, of course, none of Christie. Mo and more, though, this show of lear ing, together with the ventures int philosophy, religion and even histor which turn up in many of the novel seem to be merely decorative, havin less to do with the story than the Mothe Goose rhymes, Shakespearean ches nuts and lines from old ballads that pro vide clues for Poirot or Miss Marple.

I may have been led to this compar ison by the fact that in *Nuns an Soldiers* Murdoch has gone so far as t provide clues herself, or "charms," a one of the characters calls them. Ther are three: a reference to "The uppe side of the cube" and two quotations "She sold the ring" and "Hey, hey, th white swan." They are the legacy of sardonic Jewish intellectual who die early in the book, leaving his widow Gertrude, to be caught up in cosmi rapture with the least likely person.

The plot thickens, here concernin itself with reasonably conventional het

Alice K. Turner is fiction editor of Playboy *magazine.*

AUBADE

1.
When I empty the pitcher
it pours light and the dried body of a moth.
This is how people drown—in light, in air.
With the shad white fire over their heads.
They sit down in the woods. We wait
for them to catch their breath. Or, they sit up in bed,
their skin blue as water. And we wait for them to rise.
We hold them as a river holds water.

2.
All spring you tried to flow away.
At night I bound you
to the darkness. I closed the piano
to keep the music in. You tried so hard

to be nothing. The trees flowed out
through their buds. The roots
dreamed they were blossoms, they had learned

how to fly. How much is lost this way?

3.
In the woods light makes a place for itself.
It lies down beside me. It calls me by name.
If I close my eyes,
I find you, a woman in a house by a river.

You hold up a pitcher,
and your voice is blue and heavy as water.
On your hand, a mark like a moth.
When you pour, I am filled with forgetting.

Susan Mitchell

Susan Mitchell is a Hoyns Fellow in Poetry at the University of Virginia and a winner of the "Discovery—THE NATION, '79" Poetry Contest.

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sexual affairs, for this is not one of rdoch's more bloodthirsty or de- it works. At one point, Veronica is newhat in love with Manfred who is ove with Anne who is in love with er who is in love with Gertrude who n love with Tim who is somewhat in e with Daisy. Daisy ends the chain, ugh she might well take up with ne—that is, if Anne will forsake us Christ, with whom she also has nething going. The only union that ght work is that of Tim and Ger- de, though none of their friends ap- ove. Gertrude is, after all, a conven- nal, well-heeled, middle-class gentle- man (she studies Urdu and reads ne Austen) while Tim is a feckless no- ow artist (he reads nothing) who atches out a living by painting sen- ental pictures of cats. What the owd doesn't know, however, is that n and Gertrude have been swept ay in a Dionysian dance of destiny.

And all through the peregrinations of e story, the characters speculate on e symbolism of the three charms. At t, toward the end, light comes. The per side of the cube turns out to be a nis reference. Imagine the ball to be ube, it is that side which you attempt hit when serving. The "She" of "She ld the ring" is Jessica of *The Mer- ant of Venice*, who sold her father's g to purchase a monkey; this has eaning, for Gertrude's husband iden- ied with Shylock, and Gertrude has ded up with Tim, a monkey, surely. ne tennis reference is more obscure, d not only to us; Gertrude, who has njectured that it might refer to "pre- ocratic philosophy," is quite bewil- ered by it. But "Hey, hey, the white an," the most interesting clue, is ver identified at all. This is outra- eous—dirty pool by any standard of opular literature. I counted nine dif- rent mentions of that swan, and I ckon that by her refusal to satisfy our riosity, Iris Murdoch is giving us all ne finger. (In a rush of Miss Marpleish al, I called three reference libraries to sk them to track down "Hey, hey, the hite swan." No dice.)

But that's part of the formula, famil- ar but alchemical, with secret ingre- ients and enticing psychedelic results. hough Wittgenstein would surely ap- rove his pupil's scorn of the conven- ions, the rest of us would never let her et away with it if she weren't so enter- aining. Perhaps she's too entertaining. Twenty years ago, she was taken quite seriously as a writer, reviewed in the smart literary journals, read by all the right people. Though it's true that *The Sea, the Sea* (really a splendid novel, and funnier than this one) won Eng- land's Booker Prize last year, on this side of the Atlantic she now seems to be more enjoyed, at least by her coterie, than admired. She's in an odd posi- tion—too prolific and sensational to be "serious," too literary and possibly too English to be popular in the mass- market sense. But, luckily for her fans, she keeps going.

By the way, just to keep the record straight for the literal-minded, there is one nun, actually an ex-nun, in this novel. There are no soldiers. □

THEATER.

STEPHEN HARVEY

Amadeus

Every so often, Broadway re- quires its dollop of swanky uplift from abroad, if only to prove that we are not so phil- istine as to subsist entirely on a diet of *Sugar Babies*. The stock ingredients rarely vary; the package must contain a great big (yet easily extracted) theme whose implications speak to us all. This should be presented on a scale more opulent than usual for the commercial stage, replete with small platoons of wordless extras, which give ample op- portunity for a name director (likewise foreign) to introduce some showy *coups de théâtre*. The production also must enshrine some youngish visiting male star of the Royal Shakespeare Com- pany/National Theatre/West End axis, whose past work is largely unknown to us, but whose reputation is nevertheless daunting. While these requirements ought to be easy enough to fill, London has been letting Broadway down over the past year or so. Harold Pinter's *Betrayal* seemed slender and *déjà vu*, and was heretically cast with Americans besides; Tom Stoppard's *Night and Day* was living-room Shaw, rather inert and loquacious for New York tastes, droll Maggie Smith notwithstanding. *The Suicide*, featuring Derek Jacobi, might have sufficed, had it not suffered from the dual handicap of being (*a*) Russian and (*b*) fifty years old. Hence a positive hunger had built up for the likes of Peter Shaffer's *Amadeus* by the time it arrived here a few weeks ago. No wonder, then, that on the night I attend- ed, so much of the audience walked in with a look of exaltation.

During the next two and a half hours, they certainly got what they asked for, since there's not an instant in this pro- duction that doesn't feel brazenly con- cocted to fit the bill. *Amadeus*'s subject is no less than the nature of Genius itself, welded to that tony old perennial, the deafness of God. Illuminating it all is Ian McKellen, exuding bravura in all directions. Shaffer certainly knows a juicy dramatic conflict when he finds one, since *Amadeus* marks at least the third time he's resorted to the same basic outline. Like *The Royal Hunt of the Sun* and *Equus*, *Amadeus* is con- cerned with the moral struggle between a powerful, overcivilized establishment figure and his beloved enemy, the atavistic child of nature. (In Shaffer's world, the former always prevails, to his eternal remorse.)

In this instance, the protagonist is named Antonio Salieri (McKellen), God-fearing musical lion of the eighteenth-century Viennese court; his quarry is an *enfant terrible* named Wolf- gang Amadeus Mozart (Tim Curry), whose pagan manners perturb Salieri's genteel sensibilities, and whose prof- ligate talent offends his sense of divine justice. Naturally, any playwright is en- titled to ring variations on his own ob- sessions. What's less palatable is the way Shaffer condescendingly woos his public to swallow these bromides—not unlike Salieri's contemptuous syco- phancy onstage toward the burghers and royals who commission his composi- tions. *Amadeus*'s structure is a model of clever calculation. During act one, Shaf- fer endeavors to disarm us mod- erns by showing that a play set in the eighteenth century needn't be stuf- fy—Salieri's chatty witticisms with punch lines like "counterpoint" and "Gluck" are interposed with Mozart's endless supply of scabrous shenanigans. Thus softened up, we're ready for act two, which is devoted to pathos—Mo- zart's decline and Salieri's attendant guilt.

Amadeus sagely manages to flatter the audience for its presumed musical

In the coming months, The Nation *plans to use a roster of several theater critics as successors to the late Harold Clurman. In recent weeks, Julius Novick has per- formed the task. Beginning with this issue, Stephen Harvey takes over.*

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erudition—cueing us to laugh as the spatting Herr and Frau Mozart turn into a dry run for Papageno and Papagena—while carefully spoonfeeding us neat tidbits of Mozartiana. The second act in particular is a kind of Cliff Notes tour of the composer's last years, with Salieri pausing awestruck in the spotlight to synopsize the plots of *The Marriage of Figaro* and *The Magic Flute* and to confide the bombshell that Sarastro, and also the Commendatore in *Don Giovanni*, are stand-ins for Wolfgang's adored, resented father. At regular intervals, Shaffer calls a halt to this narrative and returns to his signature theme, which he doesn't so much develop as reiterate. Each time Salieri advances to the apron of the stage to castigate God for having bestowed genius on this dolt, Shaffer is patiently spelling out the coruscating irony of it all for us, lest we forget it while Mozart is busy offending the nobility or playing whoops-a-daisy with his obliging wife, Constanze.

For all its patina of poisoned ambition and thwarted brilliance, *Amadeus* is mostly dedicated to making everything as cozy as possible for us in the audience. The ingratiating Salieri, addressing the audience from the depths of his armchair, urges us to identify with the plight of the second-rater offered the chance to strike out at a more gifted rival, adding, with a knowing leer, "I wonder which of you would refuse that challenge?" Meanwhile, we of course can feel superior to Mozart's pettier persecutors, since we see past his venial failings to venerate his talent, something everyone on stage (save Salieri, our identity figure) is too dense and ignorant to perceive.

All this might not seem quite so simplistic had Shaffer embellished *Amadeus* with some really vigorous writing, but he tends to flog his comic strokes as relentlessly as he does the philosophical ones. Three times he squeezes a laugh out of having Constanze receive compliments to her charms with a demure, "Ta, very much." At least that often, the Emperor Joseph II squelches plebeian disagreements with the exit line, "There it is." That's a riot, too, every time it's used. The pinnacle of Salieri's epigrammatic splendor is reached quite early on, with his description of his patron the Emperor as "an admirer of music as long as it didn't make any demands on the royal brain." When Mozart chides Constanze as a "shitwit" and derides Salieri's latest opus as "dogshit," it's not the composer's stunted imagination that is brought to light.

Clearly, one of Shaffer's intentions was to demystify Mozart the man while rendering homage to the music, but after Ken Russell's rococo movies on everyone from Tchaikovsky to Mahler to Liszt, this notion of the composer as tempestuous satyr has become the most threadbare latter-day cliché of them all. It's true that Mozart's surviving letters were peppered with naughty erotica to titillate his Stanze-Wanzy, but why should it be more plausible to assume that he *always* talked and acted thus, than that his music was the emanation of an eternally serene and noble spirit? The pushy theatricality of Peter Hall's direction insures that Shaffer's portrait of Mozart isn't credible even on its own primitive terms. Apart from undisguised ego, the character's most blazing trait is irrepressible animal spontaneity. Yet that road-company Mick Jagger, Tim Curry, scampers about jerkily on the balls of his feet, darting his eyes and lolling his tongue with the mechanical panache of a toy puppy whose key was wound one turn too many.

It's hard to blame Curry for this, since the whole stage is a-crackle with actors coaxed to strike vivid attitudes—arch-backed pomposity for the upper crust, torso-heaving lustiness for the rabble. If Hall indeed decided to tart up the production a bit for American consumption, he might have toned down the Anglicisms of his cast while he was at it. In an American presentation of a play ostensibly set in Austria, it's distracting that Constanze's humble roots are expressed via Jane Seymour's feigned cockneyisms, and that Salieri occasionally reverts to his native Italian in McKellen's Oxonian inflections.

Presumably Hall is in part responsible for the unleashing of McKellen's aggressive virtuosity, which is both *Amadeus*'s most compelling attraction and the element that dashes the play's last chance to become an authentically moving spectacle. McKellen possesses a commanding stage presence and boundless technical facility, but he's so busy impressing with his prowess that he telegraphs all of Salieri's feelings before we can register them for ourselves. As the superannuated Salieri relating this tale in flashback, McKellen does a music-hall sketch of a crotchety old darling, all gnarled gestures and scrunched-up face. Transformed ir the dazzling young man of 31, it's vi that McKellen convey the depth of faith in a divine order if we're going succumb to the sadness of his fi disillusionment. Yet when invoking t Deity, the showy mask of cringing su plication McKellen affects seems no l patent an artifice than the Machiav lian charm with which Salieri chestrates Mozart's doom.

Periodically during *Amadeus*, Sali describes himself as a hack esthete ov praised in his own time and destir for oblivion in the eyes (or ears) of t generations to come. At the play's cc clusion, he further makes the w prediction that in Heaven he will ta the role of Patron Saint of t Mediocre, granting indulgence to who follow his undistinguished exa ple. With Salieri's last amen, the pl finally achieves a twinge of poignan but its object is nowhere to be seen the stage of the Broadhurst Theat With all those Tony Awards that w inevitably rain on *Amadeus*, could it that Peter Shaffer is really begging a solution for himself?

FILMS.

ROBERT HATCH

Mon Oncle d'Amérique
Tell Me a Riddle

Alain Resnais's *Mon Onc d'Amérique* (screenplay t Jean Gruault) is based on th behavioral theories of French psychologist, Dr. Henri Labori who himself appears throughout th film, rather in the role of chorus. I fact, the movie might be described as popular lecture, profusely and in geniously illustrated, on Dr. Laborit findings. Very briefly, they are that th conscious brain, what we call our min or "I," is but one of three cerebra organs lodged in our heads. The othe two, developed far back in anima evolution, operate at levels below ou awareness, and we function under false assurance of autonomy, since th sub-brains contain a bewildering mosai of impressions, instructions and admo nitions implanted from infancy (som even prenatally) that shape our con scious responses. And the output fron this bank of information propels us in single direction—toward domination

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e conflicts and confrontations—ial, professional, personal—that we e daily and interpret in myriad /s are all instances of the urge to ninate. Futhermore, the ills of man l of mankind, both physical and men- can in large part be attributed to the guish that ensues when we cannot vail over, or escape from, the ever- eated challenge. Until this is under- od, neither the individual, the society the race can hope to advance be- id its present unsatisfactory state.

We are all children of Freud, uneasily are that our egos pull in double ness with our ids, but Laborit's ws—at least when thus condensed eem mechanistic and unforgiving by nparison with those of his great pred- ssor. Accordingly, the delight one es in *Mon Oncle d'Amérique* comes gely from the sportive and witty use snais makes of the doctor's rather m diagnosis. The underlying trick s to turn explication by case history osy-turvy. The normal practice is to ostantiate a psychological thesis by ing the behavior of John C. or Mary ; in the film, however, Dr. Laborit, camera or off, makes a series of sertions and John and Mary perform cue. They are like dancers dem- strating the basic positions of ballet; ey are like rats in a cage, the latter alogy being confirmed by the fact at Resnais provides rats in cages.

He also provides Gérard Depardieu, cole Garcia and Roger-Pierre who, th supporting players as their mates, istresses, parents, children, bosses and lleagues, act out the little ironies of aborit's large wasteland. The charac- rs in these interwoven sketches are ap- aling; they have ability, enterprise, nsitivity and, necessarily under the rcumstances, a touching capacity for lf-delusion. It is unquestionably fun- y when men and women of such ap- arent brio are seen footing it to Dr. La- orit's sardonic tune, when they ape the ays of rats, or as happens from me to time, strike attitudes that eir lower brains have retained from ncient Jean Gabin or Jean Marais ovies (Resnais has found some idicrously apt clips).

At the same time, these characters are ot content to be puppets rigged to alidate a theory. Their capabilities, heir follies, their generosity and self- oncern speak to us directly, short- utting the gears and levers of the nachine in which they are suspended. Thus they are both lay figures and kin; we laugh at them, we laugh at ourselves. The film's ambiguity is at once disturbing and exhilarating. I do not know how Laborit's views are regarded by his peers but I admire the inventiveness and good humor with which Resnais has adapted them for our entertainment, possibly our instruction.

Tell Me a Riddle is the first film to be released by Godmother Productions. It was adapted from a Tillie Olsen novella and directed by Lee Grant. Almost everyone responsible for the movie is a woman and it is a feminist work.

David and Eva (Melvyn Douglas and Lila Kedrova) are an elderly couple who, years earlier, emigrated from Eastern Europe, raised a family in a Middle Western town and now find themselves sadly at odds after, it would seem, decades of tacit incompatibility. David wants to sell their house because he no longer has the strength to care for it; Eva is fierce that he shall not because it is the temple of her memories and dreams. As a girl, somewhere behind the Carpathians, she had been a revolutionary spirit, putting heart into the peasants, bringing light into the ghetto. All her life she has been a reader, all her life she has communed with her scrapbook, a compilation of the words and photographs of Emile Zola, Victor Hugo and other nineteenth-century champions of mankind. Now, her fire long stifled by motherhood and the company of a doltish husband, a paperhanger by trade, she plays old phonograph records and turns the pages of her regrets. She is soon to die and the film records her final weeks.

It is a most affecting account. David, stricken by the doctors' verdict, recovers a shadow of his youthful gallantry. The couple fly to California to visit a granddaughter (Brooke Adams), a bright, liberated girl with a loutish boyfriend and, conveniently enough, a warm heart and a degree in nursing. Eva doesn't know it, but the family has sent her out there to die, since David has sold the house and cannot persuade the new owner to sell it back. Eva dances on the shore of the Pacific; meets an old friend, a widow bearing up well under very reduced circumstances; enjoys a senior-citizen fiesta; responds to David's tenderness, and dies as serenely as could be expected under the circumstances.

This tale is well performed, particularly by Douglas and Kedrova, who invest their characters with enough dignity to save them from sentimentality. But the film calls out to us for pity, and pity can be as patronizing as charity. It is almost bound to be so when one knows as little about the people in question as can be learned from *Tell Me a Riddle*. I felt myself intruding my sympathy, particularly on David. Eva's repinings are overt enough and she has the tenacity of frailty. She rather welcomes pity. But he, it may be thought, was also worn down by their ill-matched marriage, by their life in a land that never became their own. As Douglas plays him, David is a limited man but far from insensitive. The plight of women whose talents are sacrificed to domesticity is a theme dominant in Olsen's work. She is right to stress it, for it is too often true. Nevertheless, *Tell Me a Riddle* would have been a more generous film, perhaps more tragic and less pitiful, if it had left some room for the notion that a man, even a quite ordinary man, may also come to realize at the end of his life that he has never lived it. Feminism, like most militant causes, narrows one's view. □

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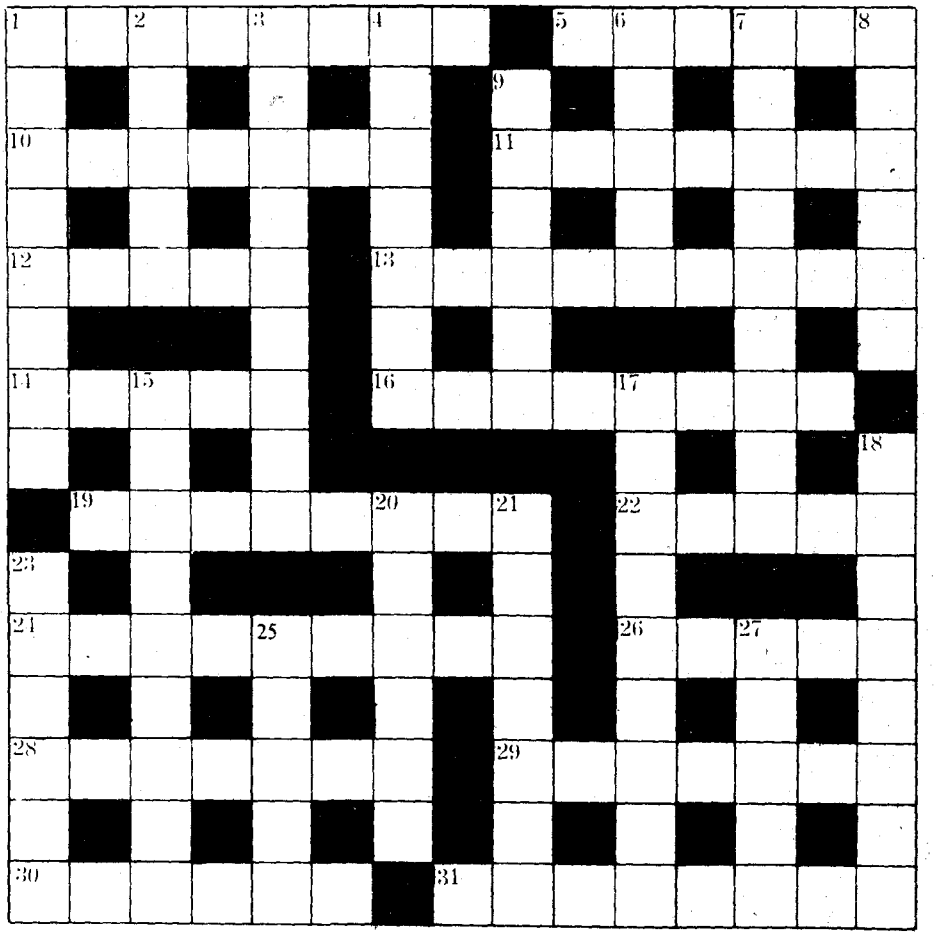

ACROSS

1 and 5 If you want to know why, just do it! (6,2,6)
10 Snake plant? (7)
11 Southern country reached with no first-class return. (7)
12 Such as Warren and "Fatha" Hines. (Noble could be one of them.) (5)
13 Top golfers might like to be there, in more than one sense. (2,3,4)
14 Get some relief back after getting in a big country. (5)
16 Millet might be associated with them. (8)
19 Quiet with a snake, but noisy as a human. (8)
22 You aren't likely to find one in the ocean—or are you? (5)
24 With flippers, this might indicate the first step. (3,3,3)
26 Broken panes high up in back. (5)
28 A famous diamond man inside gave a dance. (7)
29 Being one makes him a runner. (7)
30 and 31 Worn out with the traditional eight hours? Oh well! That's what you expect by it! (3,2,1,4,4)

DOWN

1 and 23 Were some of the diners at her table afraid they were going to be late? (Nowadays, they say she wasn't so bad!) (8,6)
2 Animal guide. (5)
3 A man might be so taken, but it's spent as an entirely different sort. (2,7)
4 It's a long road with none of this, as they say. (7)
6 Follow us back in a course of 67½ degrees. (5)
7 Fight club, given up in WW-II. (5,4)
8 Stockings only changed at the poles? (6)
9 What baby has in 19 without the extremes of good publicity. (6)
15 The foolishly brave type who took a chance on going bad. (9)
17 Possessed by the end of 15, Mr. Charles and those on a N.Y. team, perhaps, but they're not real! (9)
18 In 1984 it doesn't imply the time when most reportable events take place. (8)
20 Is one a rifleman—coming up with what auto plants have to do occasionally? (6)
21 Like a fat man with a following in the Capitol. (7)
23 See 1 down
25 Does its water run toward the back before going on? (5)
27 The wrestling victory goes to a horse. (5)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 1850

ACROSS: 1, 5 and 10 down Spare the rod and spoil the child; 9 In bloom; 10 Settees; 11 Campion; 12 Olivier; 13 Nominal charge; 15 Head over heels; 21 Combine; 22 Corsage; 23 Airport; 25 Thrush; 26 Adherent. DOWN: 1 Stitch; 2 Albumen; 3 Egotism; 4 Human interest; 6 Ostrich; 7 Atelier; 8 Deserted; 14 and 24 The coast is clear; 16 Admirer; 17 Orisons; 18 Earache; 19 Scalene; 20 Hearst.

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A Third Interview With The 115-Year-Old Magazine

Your mellow wisdom, gained from your 115 years of weekly existence, has enlightened us in the past. Now I'm wondering if there is some secret of the meaning of life that you would like to share with us?

Secrets? You want secrets, go file a Freedom of Information Act request. I don't believe in secrets. That's why I proposed the Spy Library.

The Spy Library? What's that?

It's an open-shelf library containing all of our current secrets. It would be open to all spies who can prove a sincere interest in espionage. They could search through the card catalogues and check out any secrets they like.

But I don't understand. Wouldn't that be helping them do their work?

Oh, no. You see, under the present classification system the Government does the spies' work for them. Now our secrets are labeled according to their importance—Top Secret, for the really big stuff, down to Confidential, for small-potatoes secrets. In the Spy Library, the foreign agents would have to figure out for themselves what's important.

I see. Do you have any other ideas like that?

Oh sure. All the time. My Swiss missile bank, for example. It would solve the problem of stationing U.S. missiles in Europe. We'd deposit them in Swiss bank accounts, and the trusty Swiss bankers would hide them in various Alps. As everybody knows, you can trust a Swiss banker to keep a secret. So the Europeans wouldn't have to worry about missiles on their soil and the Soviet Union wouldn't feel threatened.

I thought *The Nation* was a serious magazine of current affairs and the arts. Those ideas sound like *Mad* magazine.

My friend, it's a mad world. Sometimes the most outrageous ideas make more sense than what our Government is selling. Take the MX missile. Only Alfred E. Neuman could have dreamed that one up. Most of the time, though, I just try to make sense out of the world as it comes. And if *you* subscribe to *The Nation*, maybe you can too. Just fill out that handy coupon over on the right.

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